



**East Kitchener-Waterloo Elementary Schools Pupil  
Accommodation Review  
Minutes of Public Meeting # 1  
November 10, 2009  
Lexington Public School – 7:00 p.m.**

The first Public Meeting of the East Kitchener-Waterloo Elementary Schools Pupil Accommodation Review was held at Lexington Public School on November 10, 2009.

1. Welcome/Introductions

- Chris Smith, Manager of Planning welcomed members of the public, school communities, Trustees, and Board staff present for the evening, and made the following introductions:

Trustee Kathleen Woodcock, Mark Schinkel, Area Superintendent, Lauren Manske, Planner and Mary Hingley, Recording Secretary.

Gregg Bereznick, Area Superintendent and Nathan Hercanuck, Senior Planner have sent their regrets.

Thank you to Frank Ewald, Principal of Lexington P.S., and our host here this evening.

Approximately 52 members of the public were also in attendance.

- Mr. Smith noted that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to tell you about the Elementary Schools Accommodation Review in the East Kitchener-Waterloo community.
- When you leave, you should have a better understanding of:
  - What is an Accommodation Review?
  - How can you keep informed?
  - How can you participate?
  - When can you expect to hear the results?
- We don't however have any proposed solutions tonight because they haven't been developed yet.

2. What is an Accommodation Review?

- An accommodation review is the study of schools in an area of the Board's jurisdiction, to determine the future of a school, or group of schools.
- In this case the seven elementary schools under review are in the East quadrant of the Kitchener-Waterloo community. They include: Bridgeport, Elizabeth Ziegler, King Edward, Lexington, Margaret Avenue, Prueter and Suddaby Public Schools.
- An accommodation review can ultimately result in recommendations to close one or more schools and/or consolidate schools; which means having students from two or more

schools at one location. It can also result in changes to attendance boundaries and program changes, such as a JK-6 school becoming a JK-8 school. Recommendations can also be made for new construction such as additions, major upgrades or a brand new school.

- This process is based on a broad range of criteria regarding the quality of the learning experience for students, the physical assets, development and enrolment projections, etc., put together by the Ministry of Education to ensure the full involvement of an informed local community – a transparent process.
- This is the first formal Public Meeting of at least four that we will hold throughout the Review process. The dates for these meetings are not finalized as they will depend on the time needed to do the review, and to come up with the appropriate solutions.
- We would certainly like to report to the Board and have a decision before the end of this school year, June 2010, but are not bound to that.

### 3. Ministry Guidelines/Board Policy

- As staff at the Board, we identify areas to conduct an Accommodation Review based on a number of different criteria, such as:
  - *Reorganization involving the school or group of schools could enhance program and learning opportunities for students;*
  - For a full list of criteria please visit our website for tonight's presentation at: [www.wrdsb.ca/about-us/planning/accommodation-reviews/east-kitchener-waterloo-elementary-schools-accommodation-rev](http://www.wrdsb.ca/about-us/planning/accommodation-reviews/east-kitchener-waterloo-elementary-schools-accommodation-rev)
- In 2006, the Ministry of Education developed a set of guidelines for Boards to follow when considering school closure or consolidation. The intention of these guidelines was to create a transparent public consultation process. We are following the Ministry's guidelines for this Review, along with our Board's Policy 4000 adopted in May 2007.
- You may be aware that the Ministry came out with an updated guideline this summer; however, we will be using the 2006 guideline and Board Policy adopted in May 2007 because this Review was approved prior to the revisions from the Ministry.

### 4. Why an Accommodation Review in East Kitchener-Waterloo?

Ms. Manske outlined the reasons for a review in this area:

- *Facility condition:*
  - With respect to Lexington P.S. the majority of the classrooms and this gym are temporary. The structure is a porta-pack and is approaching the end of its originally projected 15 year lifespan.
  - There are lesser issues at other schools in the review area; however, we do have a number of older facilities with accessibility issues.
- *Enrolment changes/shifts:*
  - Some schools in the area have been experiencing enrolment decline, a system-wide issue over the past several years (but this is changing), whereas others have remained stable, or are experiencing growth.
- *New Development:*

- In the Bridgeport North neighbourhood we are expecting an additional 400 units from the Activa River Ridge subdivision, 192 units from Woolwich Estates, 47 units from Maverick Street development and 86 units from Cook Homes for an approximate total of 725 units.
- This development had been on hold due to traffic concerns/issues. Now that the roundabout at Bridge and Lancaster is almost complete, we will see this development starting up very shortly.
- *New direction in curriculum/school organization:*
  - The Ministry announced on October 27, 2009 its plans to roll out the Early Learning Program beginning in September 2010. This will affect our facilities right now because kindergarten students will require additional space.
  - The Ministry's curriculum is also leaning towards the JK-8 model and organization of schools. Our Board has not made an official decision to move in this direction, but the wheels are in motion.
- *Potential for new facilities:*
  - In 2001 the Board purchased a property on Falconridge Drive in Kitchener (Bridgeport North area). No construction plans are in place for this property yet, but it is a potential location if the outcome of this review is to build a new school.

Ms. Manske led the group present through a bit of background of the related boundary studies to the north and timelines that brought us here to the Accommodation Review, as well as highlighting the current school boundaries and enrolment.

## 5. Accommodation Review Committee (ARC)

Ms. Manske noted that in order to steer this review, we have established an Accommodation Review Committee, which is a key part of this process.

- The Accommodation Review Committee, which we shorten to "ARC", is a structured working group that works with Planning and other Board staff as well as community members in looking at the situation, the available information and developing scenarios, which will lead to possible recommendations.

## 6. Objectives – Lauren Manske outlined the draft objectives:

- One of the most important processes when conducting a review is the setting of objectives. The objectives tell us what we want to accomplish, without predetermining an outcome.
- We also need objectives in order to develop and evaluate scenarios. The draft objectives discussed tonight were developed by the Accommodation Review Committee by brainstorming the opportunities and challenges for the area.
- Some of the key issues that the committee members have brought forth are obvious, but that makes them no less important. We do not place any weighting on the objectives or rank one higher than the other.

***“To determine a permanent solution for Lexington P.S.”***

- The fact that the Lexington facility is a temporary structure and these students require a permanent space somewhere sets this objective.

***“To determine viability of a JK-8 school in the Review area.”***

- One of the key things we have been hearing from both parents and senior staff since this Review was triggered by the Northeast Waterloo Boundary Study conducted over the past 2 years is: what is the viability of a JK-8 school in the area? If a JK-8 program is added to the area, how would the 7/8 program be affected at Margaret Avenue?

***“To determine long-term boundaries for schools in the Review area.”***

- Another issue to consider is development in the area. There are a few pockets of development left in this area, so we will need to find a solution that considers this.

***“To determine need to keep/utilize the 410 Falconridge Drive, Kitchener property.”***

- Back in 2001 when the Board purchased this property the rules were a bit different, and it was able to purchase property in a plan of subdivision if they felt a school may be needed in that area in the future. So now is the time to do a needs assessment.

***“To support optimal use of facilities, capital and operating costs.”***

- This objective is self-explanatory; we want to optimize the use of the facilities we have, and more adequately match enrolment to capacity.

***“To have regard for the Good Schools Standing Committee guidelines on school size and ensure well-balanced student populations.”***

- This refers to a report that was brought to the Board in May 2007 titled Elementary School Size and Configuration. The Good Schools Standing Committee provided some guiding principles with respect to school sizes, including:
  - being sensitive to the impact on elementary students transitioning between schools;
  - minimizing the number of schools with enrolments over 600 students;
  - where possible, having at least 2 classes per grade in JK-6 to support professional learning communities; and
  - where possible, having more than two classes per grade in Grades 7 and 8 to support program.
- We like to keep these principles in mind when conducting a review.

***“To take into consideration distribution and accessibility of Special Education and English as a Second Language (ESL) programs.”***

- There is always concern that specialized programs fall into schools that have surplus space, and these programs are not necessarily available to a student within their home school boundary.

***“To have regard for community schools and minimize transportation costs in the long-term.”***

- This objective addresses the desire for ‘community schools’, meaning a school that the majority of the school’s students can walk to. This also addresses the fact that we are currently busing a few areas to schools which are not necessarily the closest neighbourhood school.

***“To be mindful of Ministry plans with respect to curriculum and program changes (e.g. Early Learning Program, class sizes, etc.)”***

- Initiatives that the Ministry brings forward can have an affect on how we utilize our schools, and how many students we can accommodate at a facility. We must keep this in mind when developing accommodation options.

***“To address student transitions where changes are proposed.”***

- There are many possible outcomes from this review, all of which could involve some form of student transition. Having this as an objective is important, so that this issue does not get lost. It may simply mean that we will work with staff and students to ensure smooth transitions, if they are required.

Ms. Manske noted that these objectives are still in draft format, and if you feel that something important has been left out, or needs to be changed, please send us an email, give us a call or use the comment sheets tonight. It is valuable to have these objectives in place before we start developing accommodation options.

## 7. School Valuation Templates/School Information Profiles

- Part of the formal accommodation process is that a School Valuation Template must be completed for each school in the review. The School Valuation Template or School Information Profile is really a comprehensive inventory of the facility.
- When the new provincial guidelines regarding Accommodation Reviews came out, Boards were required to develop a generic School Valuation framework that took into account four perspectives:
  1. Value to the Student
  2. Value to the Board
  3. Value to the Community
  4. Value to the Local Economy
- For each accommodation review the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) has the opportunity to customize the Generic School Valuation Framework to reflect the specific issues of their accommodation review.
- Although they are called “Valuation” templates, we have taken the stance that all of our schools are of equal value to the student, board, community and local economy.

- We are not using these templates to rank one school over another; we use them as a tool to look at all the schools in the area objectively and fairly, so that everyone involved in this process has the relevant information.
- When we develop a scenario or solution and evaluate it against the objectives, we can take into account that for example: school 'A' has a fifty year old roof in need of repair, school 'B' needs retrofitting to meet accessibility standards or that school 'C' fields and playground are the only significant green space in a community.
- We have asked the members of the ARC to assist us in filling out the templates, and have modified it slightly; we also invite members of the public to submit information.
- We had hoped to have a template completed for each of the schools to bring tonight, but since the information comes from so many different sources, we were unable to do so. Once we have them completed, we will post the information on our website, and provide hard copies to each of the schools in the review area.
- **Please note** that an Accommodation Review Committee binder is available at each of the schools in the review area for the public to access.

## 8. Next Steps

Mr. Smith outlined the next steps in the process:

- The ARC continues to meet to discuss existing conditions and develop scenarios.
- A minimum of 3 more Public Meetings will take place:
  - Public Meeting # 2 (January): we will look at scenarios, reviewing ones the ARC has developed, and discussing any other potential scenarios (likely in smaller break out groups).
  - Public Meeting # 3 (March): costing and more detailed information for the front-runner scenarios.
  - ARC prepares draft School Valuation Report and Recommendations.
  - Public Meeting # 4 (April): presentation of the draft ARC Valuation Report.
  - Staff brings Report and Recommendations to Board Trustees.
  - Trustees vote on recommendations of Staff Valuation Report.
  - Trustees make any decisions having regard for the work of the ARC.

## 9. Public Information and Access/Contact Information

- All relevant information is available on the Board's webpage: [www.wrdsb.ca](http://www.wrdsb.ca)
- Hard copies available upon request.
- ARC school binders are available at each of the schools in the review area,
- You can participate in this review by sending in comments to our email address: [boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca](mailto:boundaryfeedback@wrdsb.on.ca), by calling us at 519-570-0003 ext. 4419, or by contacting your school reps on the ARC through school council.
- Mr. Smith asked for any questions/comments.

## 10. Questions/Other

Q – Why was this specific group of schools chosen for the review, and why not the more northerly section of Waterloo?

R – We began a boundary study in this area more than 2 years ago that included Lester B. Pearson P.S. and the growing enrolment there. A solution was reached with the future construction of the new Millen Woods P.S. which will open in September 2011. There were boundary changes that took place affecting Lincoln Heights and Sandowne, the solution including a major addition being approved for Sandowne. We are now looking at Lexington, the vacant Falconridge site and Margaret Avenue's catchment area (including its feeder schools) as this is the last piece.

Q – The geographic area is so big to support the 7/8 program, if you build a JK-8 program in this area what happens to Margaret Avenue?

R – Distance to the 7/8 program here has been a concern; Margaret Avenue's catchment is very large. Could it be converted to a JK-6 or JK-8 facility? These are all things that can be looked at, and could be an outcome of the review.

Q – With the enrolment numbers here, can we expect only 2 JK-8 schools, or could the area support 3 or 4?

R – Based on the numbers we have now, don't think the area could support 3 or 4 JK-8's. JK-8 with JK-6 community feeder school – we will have to look at that.

Q – If recommendations go to the Board in June 2010, what impact time wise will there be on the students?

R – Boundary changes usually take one school year to implement; construction (new school or major addition) takes a minimum of 2 years. We have to factor in transitions at this point as well.

Q – The draft objectives we are looking at – are they in some kind of order/ranking, is there some priority or weighting there?

R – We have not weighted them in the past. The ARC uses them as a decision screen, and they are used on a meets/doesn't meet basis when put up against the scenarios. The Lexington facility is however a priority as well as the 7/8 program delivery. It's not just about the cheapest option either, Mr. Smith noted. Cost is important but not necessarily the Board's first priority.

Q – If a decision is made to build a new school, can Lexington stay open for another 2 years seeing that it has already reached its lifespan as a porta-pack?

R – Yes, with some minor maintenance issues it will be fine. Also, depending on the recommendations, for example if it's decided to build a new school on the same site, transitions come into play – we might have to place those students somewhere temporarily.

Q – Regarding daycare in the schools, is this a consideration in new construction?

R – Yes, it is our Board policy to seek and partner with a child care provider when we build new schools or major additions. With the announcement of the Early Learning Program and before and after school child care, this will likely facilitate a change in daycare in the future; we will need to understand this part.

Q – French Immersion (FI) – how much space is needed in a school to offer this, and is it a goal of the Board to have it offered in all of its schools?

R – The Board certainly wouldn't mind FI in all schools, but it is a program that is generated by parent interest. You may not have that interest in your home school; it might be

in a neighbouring boundary. Mr. Schinkel, Area Superintendent noted that it is a Partial French Immersion Program and Information Sessions are taking place this month at various school locations to provide information about the program to parents of senior kindergarten students. Please check our website for times and locations.

Q – Will the ARC be bringing scenarios to the next Public Meeting?

R – Yes, we should have some to share with you at the next Public Meeting, and typically we break into smaller groups to look at and evaluate the scenarios.

Q – If we have questions between the Public Meetings, who do we call?

R – Please call us in the Planning Department at 519-570-0003, ext. 4419.

Q – Do you look at age of facilities? King Edward and Margaret Avenue are pretty old schools, is age a factor or is it enrolment?

R – The most important issue for us is the students and delivery of good programs, it is not a strike against a school because of its age. Some of them are fabulous old buildings; however the fact that they often are not accessible is a concern for students, staff and parents. A solution may be to address accessibility at these schools. Also, typically the older schools are in neighbourhoods not drawing the enrolment, and having to bus students there to fill the school takes away from the community school feeling.

Q – Regarding the scenarios and recommendations, who on the committee has voting rights?

R – The voting members on the ARC are the parent reps, and the City/Community reps. We try and work on consensus. Planning Staff and principals do not vote but are vital to the process. Board staff reviews the final ARC report and provides its report and recommendations to the Trustees, who have the ultimate decision to accept the report in full or take parts of it and offer other options.

Q – Are there projections on turnover in neighbourhoods? Access to school is an issue for some, for example those in the lower income bracket that have their children bused to school, may not drive so how do they get to the school themselves?

Blending older schools into community centres, are we moving back to this? It could be rental income.

R – Yes, there are projections, we are tied into Canada Mortgage and Housing updates. Numbers come in yearly, i.e. in the growth areas we can see the projections for kindergarten and primary grades and if they are increasing or decreasing. The province is experiencing declining enrolment, but not our Region, we are holding steady and our birth rates are increasing which is good for our future.

With respect to using our schools for community uses; it's not as simple as it sounds. If you keep a school open with a small population you run into difficulty with program delivery, you end up with combined classes, and it's hard on the smaller staff then to run extracurricular activities, etc. You may also run into security issues if you have community members and others in and out of the schools during the day. Also, libraries for example, have their own criteria for where they want to be housed; they want to be where the growth is as well.

Q – The old Brighton school became a daycare.

R – Yes, and the City uses the rest of the site as park space.

Q – Looking for these opportunities is important.

R – Yes, the Board has worked with City pools and libraries before (Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School as an example).



Q – Why is there no City of Waterloo rep on the ARC?

R – They had no staff resource able to make the time commitment to sit on the committee, but they are on call for us to provide any information we require. City and community input is essential to this process, so we will call on them when needed.

Q – In a JK-6 school that has surplus space, why not convert them to JK-8?

R – That is an option. The senior school boundaries typically need to be larger in order to deliver the program. The number of 7/8 classes in a JK-8 school would have to be taken into account for program delivery as well.

Q – Why hasn't the Board given clear direction regarding 7/8 senior schools?

R – We have asked for clarity but although there has been no firm statement, we have had a pretty good indication that as we move forward JK-6 and JK-8 is where they want to go. There is still strong support for the current 7/8 schools however; the program has changed over the years to become more of a continuum of the JK-8 curriculum.

Q – We do need to be mindful of trends and look forward say 20 years from now.

R – Yes, we do need stability in our system; there have been lots of changes. We were the last Board to get involved in junior kindergarten. Now we have Primary Class Size and the Early Learning Program, which are positive steps.

Q – The high school prep that the 7/8 students get at Margaret Avenue will get lost if you split them up into JK-8 programs.

R – There are pluses and minuses to the 7/8 senior school setting. A JK-8 setting gives the older students mentoring opportunities with the younger students, positive role models.

Q – 7/8's can have a negative impact on younger students as well though.

R – Yes, as mentioned, there are pluses and minuses.

Q – Will there be a formal Board decision coming down for this review regarding 7/8 senior schools?

R – There is a definite lean towards that, and probably softly over time it could happen. The Waterloo Catholic Board runs all elementary schools as JK-8, but our Board is broader and more diverse. If you would like to talk further about this issue, please contact your area superintendent for their thoughts.

Q – Why is the 7/8 boundary so big?

R – The large boundary is needed to support the senior program; typically the enrolments run around 350 – 400 + in the senior schools.

Q – Bridgeport P.S. shows its capacity at 126%, is this due to the Woolwich Street area expansion?

R – Yes, and the On-the-Ground Capacity does not reflect the addition yet. Work was done to the office and the Learning Resource Centre as well as building additional classrooms.

Q – Is there any long-term proof that a JK-8 school is more stable versus a 7/8 school? Have studies been done?

R – No, partly because we are constantly adapting to make use of the space we have.

Q – With respect to the core areas and schools located there, real estate agents give you the impression that the downtown schools are not good.

R – That may be true of some realtors unfortunately, but it is not fact. That is why we track intensification plans with the cities. We still have a presence around all 3 core areas in our Board, and are proud of the schools that provide that.

Mr. Smith thanked all for coming, and gave the contact numbers and Board website information for the public to access with any questions or comments:

Website:

[www.wrdsb.ca/about-us/planning/accommodation-reviews/east-kitchener-waterloo-elementary-schools-accommodation-rev](http://www.wrdsb.ca/about-us/planning/accommodation-reviews/east-kitchener-waterloo-elementary-schools-accommodation-rev)

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