



## REPORT TO BOARD OF TRUSTEES March 29, 2011

Paul Wubben, Director of Education

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**SUBJECT:** Report of the Accommodation Review Committee – St. Michael Catholic School, Turnerville

**PREPARED BY:** Deb Crawford, Superintendent of Education

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### **BACKGROUND:**

On September 13, 2010 the St. Clair Catholic District School Board approved the establishment of an Accommodation Review Committee for St. Michael Catholic School in Turnerville.

The members of the Accommodation Review Committee were:

Chair: Deb Crawford, Superintendent of Education

#### Voting Members:

Cathie Vanek, Catholic School Community Council Chair – St. Michael Catholic School  
Wendy Vercauteren, Catholic School Community Council Member – St. Michael Catholic School  
Colleen Janssens, Catholic School Community Council Member – St. Michael Catholic School  
Ellen Jennen, Business/Community Representative

#### Non Voting Members:

Shirley Churchill, Principal – St. Michael Catholic School, Turnerville  
Deacon Jerry Lozon, representing the Kent Deanery

The ARC met on four occasions at St. Michael Catholic School, with the following topics for discussion:

October 28, 2010 – Reviewing the Process  
January 11, 2011 – Impacts on Program, Business Case and Options that Warrant Consideration  
February 8, 2011 – Considering the Possibilities and Making Recommendations  
March 29, 2011 – Confirming the Decisions and Honouring the Past

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:**

An examination of St. Michael Catholic School, Turnerville as of September 2010, indicated that the school is operating at 34% capacity, well below the 85% threshold established by the Province. The school is built to accommodate 158 students; however, only 54 were enrolled as of September 2010. The school is staffed in excess of the ministry requirement, yet it still has a triple grade (1, 2 and 3) class in the 2010 – 11 school year. Severe declining enrolment has had a

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significant impact upon school programs, extra-curricular activities, budget, staffing, transportation and facility management. As a result, in accordance with Policy 7.4 *Student Accommodation and Boundary Review*, Trustees directed that an accommodation review take place.

**SUMMARY OF KEY INFORMATION:**

- The enrolment of the school as of September 2010 was 54 students. In 2015, if all currently enrolled students remain at the school, the enrolment is projected to be 7.
- The On The Ground Capacity (OTG - a ministry measure of the occupancy of a school building) as of September 2010 was 34%, and is projected to drop to 4% in 2015.
- St. Michael was originally built in 1961 and has had additions in 1963, 1969, 1991, 1994 and 1995. St. Michael has 7 classrooms and sits on 3.85 acres.
- Continued declining enrolment will result in further program and staffing constraints.

**MANDATE OF THE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW COMMITTEE:**

The purpose of this ARC is to consider the issue of excess pupil places at St. Michael, caused by declining enrollment. The impact of this phenomenon has been pervasive, impacting program, extra-curricular activities, budget, staffing, transportation, and facility management. The ARC is mandated to make a viable recommendation to the board with respect to the future of St. Michael, and with regard to the current students, transportation, boundaries and the site.

The ARC is mandated to consider the problem, not just from the perspective of 2010-2011 but through 2015-2016 because another ARC cannot be established for this review area for another five years. Thus the ARC must have “the long view”. While the ARC’s establishment was triggered by the present circumstances, the future must be a primary component in considering the actions the ARC will recommend.

**SUMMARY OF ARC MEETINGS:**

The ARC considered the issue of excess pupil places at St. Michael Catholic School, caused by declining enrollment. At its meeting of October 28, 2010 the ARC reviewed and completed the School Information Profile Valuation Instrument. It was noted that the projected decline in enrolment would further challenge staffing and the provision of extra-curricular teams. The ARC reviewed the report *Demographic Overview* and noted that the current OTG capacity of 34% would decline to 4% in 2015, significantly below the ministry threshold of 85%.

The January 11, 2011 ARC meeting considered the impact on program and business as well as the options that might be considered for addressing the problem. Program concerns focused on the ongoing staffing challenges due to the low enrolment and the detrimental effect upon extra-curricular activities. The report *Staffing, Finances and Transportation* identified declining enrolment as the Board’s greatest financial challenge, given that operating revenues are a direct function of student enrolment. The report *Boundary Information* detailed current student

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distribution within existing boundaries. It also provided options for the ARC's consideration of new boundaries and the possible options for current St. Michael students to attend bordering Catholic schools.

With the consent of the ARC, the Director of Education informed the committee that his recommendation to Trustees will be that, due to declining enrolment, the school is no longer viable and should be closed at the end of June 2011. After some discussion, the ARC members agreed that, given the information presented, the closing of St. Michael Catholic School would be the only viable recommendation. In turning its attention towards the future, ARC members requested that tours of both Good Shepherd in Thamesville and St. Vincent in Chatham be arranged, so that parents can begin to consider their options for September 2011.

The February 8, 2011 ARC meeting considered the possibilities and recommendations to be made for the closure of St. Michael Turnerville as of June 30, 2011. The report *Disposition of Surplus Real Property* explained that the sale and disposition of the school property will be governed by O. Reg. 444/98. ARC members recommended the formation of a school-based Legacy Committee to facilitate the closure of the school and the disposition of memorabilia associated with the school's 50 years of Catholic education.

The report *Transition Plans for Students* provided information regarding the support of special education students and the ARC recommended that proactive plans be established to transition all students to their new Catholic schools for the 2011 – 2012 school year.

With regard to a legacy committee and the transition plans, the Superintendent of Education directed the principal, in March 2011, to:

- Establish a Legacy Committee of current and past Catholic School Community Council Members, which will function separate and apart from the ARC, for the purpose of formulating a process for the disposition of school memorabilia;
- Establish plans for all students at St. Michael Catholic School, who opt to attend a Catholic school, to register at their new school and begin a process of transition, which is timely and proactive; and that the same process begin for all special education students of St. Michael Catholic School, who opt to attend either Catholic or public schools; so that they are allowed opportunities to become familiar with their new school communities.

Proposed new boundaries were presented in the report *Boundary Information* and estimated average bus travel times were outlined in the report *Transportation*. ARC members considered the information provided and made preliminary recommendations to ensure that the transition of students would be timely and pro-active.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

**That the St. Clair Catholic District School Board receive the report: *Report of the Accommodation Review Committee – St. Michael Catholic School, Turnerville* for information.**

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**PRIMARY RECOMMENDATION:**

**That St. Michael Catholic School, Turnerville, be closed effective June 30, 2011.**

**SECONDARY RECOMMENDATIONS:**

During the four ARC meetings, ARC members had the opportunity to hear several presentations from school board staff, to ask questions, to seek further information and to reflect on the information they received. Based upon this discussion, the ARC makes the following secondary recommendations, which would support the successful implementation of its primary recommendation.

- 1. That the proposed new boundaries for the St. Michael Turnerville area be adopted, as outlined in the report *Boundary Information*.**
- 2. That all current students and siblings who are not yet enrolled, living in the St. Michael Catholic School area have the option of attending Good Shepherd Catholic School with transportation provided from their current pick up location for the remainder of their elementary school education.**
- 3. That all students in Grade 8 as of September 2011 have the option of attending Good Shepherd Catholic School with transportation provided.**
- 4. That all current and future students will have the option to attend school according to the new proposed boundaries, as outlined in the report *Boundary Information*, with transportation provided.**
- 5. That current students and siblings who are not yet enrolled, living in the St. Michael Catholic School area requesting to attend a Catholic school outside of the new boundary structure, other than Good Shepherd Catholic School, will be approved and grandfathered for the duration of their elementary school careers. Current students and siblings who are not yet enrolled opting to attend St. Vincent Catholic School will be provided with transportation from their current pick up location for the duration of their elementary school education provided that space is available at St. Vincent Catholic School.**