

Board staff recommends closing Credit View

By Bill Rea

Trustee Stan Cameron called it 'a sad day' Tuesday as the Peel District School Board received a staff recommendation to close Credit View Public School this June.

Talk of closing the school, located between Terra Cotta and Cheltenham, at the corner of King Street and Mississauga Road, has been on the table for months, although staff was originally suggesting a June 2018 closure. But the Final Staff Report (FSR), that went before trustees Tuesday night, indicated a preference to get things over with, rather than putting up with another year of declining enrolment.

Another significant change involves the distribution of students.

The Initial Staff Report (ISR), issued in December, had set a boundary at King Street. It called for Grade 7 and 8 students living south of King to go to Alloo Public School, while those living to the north would be sent to Caledon Central Public School. The revised recommendation will see them all sent to Alloo. The original plan was to send younger students south of King the Alloo while those to the north would go to Belfountain Public School. The plan now is to send them all to Belfountain.

Staff cited comments received at a Feb. 6 public meeting, at which people expressed concern over the King Street boundary, claiming it would split the community. There were also issues with busing students in Terra Cotta all the way to Caledon Central. The enrolment situation at Credit View has been a concern of the Board for sometime, and a Pupil Accommodation Review (PAR) was started late last year. It involved Credit View, Alloo, Belfountain, Caledon Central and Alton Public Schools. Particular notice was given to the enrolment at Credit View, which had continued to decline to the point where there were 81 students in September 2016 spread over 10 grades (junior kindergarten to Grade 8), with every grade being split and no grade having more than 13 students.

'Six grades have less than 10 students,' the FSR stated. 'One grade has only two students.'

Staff also noted Credit View has the lowest rated capacity of the schools being considered in the PAR, along with the greatest need for repair.

The report also stated sending the young students to Belfountain would boost its enrolment, while allowing it to maintain the small 'country school' environment which the community seems to favour. Staff also stated that flex boundaries could be applied, so Credit View students being sent to Belfountain could have option of staying with their peers and going to Caledon Central for Grades 7 and 8.

The matter has not yet been finalized. The Board plans to hear public delegations March 22, with trustees slated to make the final decision at their April 12 meeting.

'Recommending the closure of a school is always a tough matter,' Randy Wright, controller of planning and accommodation support services for the Board, observed, adding people will seldom get thanked for such a move.

'This is a sad day; it's a sad report,' Cameron agreed. 'It's a difficult time for any community.'

He added this is his first time as a trustee that he's had to deal with a school closing in his constituency, pointing out the impact and magnitude on the community is the same, regardless of how big the school is.

Superintendent of Education Michael Logue assured Cameron that all Credit View students will have access to the same programs they've been used to when they get to their new schools. Cameron asked if there will be any change in the quality of programs.

'The answer is no,' Logue replied, adding the chances for peer interaction among the students currently at Credit View will increase.

He also said none of the teachers at Credit View will be losing their jobs.

Cameron was also concerned about the future of the school site, pointing out it's in a picturesque location.

'It's called 'Credit View' for a reason,' he remarked.

'There are no plans to sell the school or the property,' Wright told him. 'None.'

Cameron later said he was not surprised by the recommendations, although he agreed staff had listened to the concerns expressed by the public.

'Eighty-one children in a 10-grade school in 2017 is not sustainable,' he observed, adding the Ministry of Education would not authorize funding for something like that today.

Although the final decision has not yet been made, Cameron said later he expects the closure will go through.

He did point out local residents will still be able to make deputations March 22.

'I think it is an opportunity for people to come and have their final say,' he said.

?The staff and students and the families have done the absolute best that they could do,? he added.

He also expressed the hope that the community will work on some form of celebration ?of the wonderful years the school has given the community.?