

Type of Decision									
Meeting Date	Friday, March 5, 2010				Report Date	Wednesday, March 3, 2010			
Decision Required	X	Yes		No	Priority	X	High		Low
Direction	x	Information Only			Type of Meeting	X	Open		Closed
REPORT TITLE									
Report 05/02/10/207									

Subject: Additional information on Children First presentation to Council and their request to stop the closure of Morrison School.

RECOMMENDATION: That Council adopt the following resolution requesting that the School Board be lobbied to provide to the public the information used to base the decision to close Morrison School and move those students to Mackenzie.

WHEREAS the group "Children's First" presented additional information to Council at its meeting of Friday, February 26, 2010 and further supplied documents to support their opinion;

AND WHEREAS in August of 2009 the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria lobbied the provincial government to support the Community Schools Alliance and its request for a moratorium on school closures;

AND WHEREAS this "smart moratorium" has a goal of providing time for the Ministry, school boards and municipalities to work together to develop policies addressing issues such as planning for declining enrolments, a mutually agreed upon Accommodation Review Committee process, a review of funding to rural and small community schools and establishing a working relationship between municipalities and school boards that provides transparency and accountability;

AND WHEREAS it appears that the Renfrew County District School Board's recent reassessment, decision to close Morrison School and relocate its students to Mackenzie High School which has not been retrofitted to accommodate those students has been less than open, transparent or accountable;

AND WHEREAS the decision of the independent facilitator in 2005 was to maintain the separation of the JK-6 and 7-12 grades;

AND WHEREAS there is some question as to the fitness of the High School building to adequately accommodate a JK-12 population in its current condition;

AND WHEREAS funding for the necessary renovations is not currently available;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the Council of the United Townships of Head, Clara & Maria does hereby support the Children First group in its search for transparency and accountability in the process utilized to support the School Board's decision;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the Minister of Education request that the Renfrew County Public School Board allow public access to the information used to support the recommendation to close Morrison School including the written documents handed out at the three consultation meetings in Deep River; separate written reports of the three consultation meetings

including the responses to the survey; and the rationale for concluding that Option 1 was the favoured choice of meeting attendees;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT this Council does request the Minister of Education to appoint a facilitator, similar to and with the same power as the one appointed in 2005 for the same school, to investigate, report and make recommendations on the funding for Mackenzie High School and closing of Morrison School prior to any further action being taken to close the school.

BACKGROUND/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The information included provides additional background to the presentation that was received last week. It appears that the plan to close Morrison School has occurred without due process, or at least without the openness and transparency that public bodies are required to provide under MFIPPA.

It is the School Board's final decision to make however; the process that they used does not appear to be fair or accountable. They have not provided information as requested. They have appeared to have made their decision prior to going through the motions of having public consultation. There was misinformation circulated (loss of funding). Requests to obtain information have been denied.

Even if the decision to proceed with the closure of the school is upheld, the process should be investigated. Previous decisions supported keeping the schools separated. Why should that not be supported this time? Answers are not forthcoming.

Another concern is the physical attributes of the facilities in question and the need for significant additional funding simply to bring them to standard. It appears as though this decision would be one that would move young children into a substandard environment that is not conducive to their needs.

Children First are requesting a release of what should be public information and an independent facilitator to once again, stop the current School Board from pushing this change through.

Options/Discussion: Support or not; make amendments to the resolution.

Financial Considerations/Budget Impact: Budget impact none.

Policy Impact: None

Approved and Recommended by the Clerk

Melinda Reith,

Municipal Clerk

Melinda Reith