

VICTORIA NORTH
STUDENT ACCOMMODATION STUDY GROUP
LOOKING INWARD PROPOSAL REVIEW
FINAL REPORT
DECEMBER 2014

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
ABOUT US	4
PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE US	4
OUR BELIEFS/ VALUES	5
PROPOSED OPTION	5
INITIAL REACTION.....	5
STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL	5
WEAKNESSES OF THIS PROPOSAL	5
UNKNOWNNS	6
IMPACTS	6
COSTS	7
ALTERNATE PROPOSAL/RATIONALE	8
PUBLIC INPUT SESSION	10
POST PUBLIC SESSION INPUT	12

Introduction

The looking Inward document was drafted in the fall of 2012 and released for public review and input in April of 2013. Public information sessions, information sessions for the NSTU and CUPE Unions, School Advisory Council focus groups, student focus groups, Principal's information and input sessions and public input sessions in each of the seven Families of Schools marked the efforts of the Cape Breton Victoria Regional School Board to engage the educational stakeholders in this planning process.

Looking Inward is a planning framework for long term facility provision and system sustainability in a time of changing demographics.

The original document contained 32 scenarios designed to start the conversation with respect to long term facility requirements within the School Board. With the completion of the first round of consultations fifty additional scenarios were put forth for consideration. These were generated from the SAC focus groups, school based administrators and public input sessions. Two web based surveys generated another four hundred responses to variables associated with attempting to establish a long range plan that would be responsive to the challenges facing the School Board.

Staff reviewed all the scenarios , generated a series of proposals for further consideration, shared the input received with the School Board, and in April of 2014 released a document entitled " Looking Inward- Disposition of Scenarios to Family of Schools Suggested Solutions" . The document also contained proposals as to how school facilities within each Family of Schools could be configured to accommodate students on the long term.

Public reaction to the proposals for each Family of Schools was sought by once again engaging stakeholders in the process. Student Accommodation Study Groups were established in each Family of Schools. The mandate of each Student Accommodation Study Group (SASG) was threefold:

- a) To continue the multi-part conversation of stakeholder engagement by soliciting input from educational partners on proposals designed to sustain required school facilities and to protect/maintain programs and services for students.
- b) To provide the Family of Schools Student Accommodation Study Group with an opportunity to reflect on the proposals with a view to commenting/recommending the identified proposal or suggesting viable alternatives.
- c) To afford educational stakeholders the opportunity to generate a response document on the evolving plan including recommendations for the consideration of the Board.

STUDENT ACCOMMODATION STUDY GROUP

ABOUT US

OUR FAMILY OF SCHOOLS Victoria North

OUR CO-ORDINATOR (S) Charles Sheppard

MEMBERS OF OUR STUDY GROUP

NAME	SCHOOL
Faye Fricker	CLANS
Barb Costello	Cabot
Donnie Simms	Cabot
Tom Sheppard	Cabot
Karen M. Hatcher	Cabot
Wanda Barron	Cabot
Joanne Vassallo	Cabot
Maxine Hardy	Cabot/Cape Smokey
Debbie Poirier	North Highlands
Marie Barry	North Highlands
Mary Ann MacDonald	North Highlands
Tracy Buchanan	Cape Smokey
Kim Stockley	Cape Smokey
Angela Currie-Simms	Cape Smokey
Shelley Coones	Cape Smokey

PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE US

1. Adequacy
- 2/3. Equity/ Responsiveness
4. Sustainability
5. Integrity
6. Accountability
7. Transparency
8. Stewardship

OUR BELIEFS / VALUES

1. Student learning/ achievement are our primary concern.
2. We value having a school in the existing school communities.
3. Transportation of students is a major consideration North of Smokey.
4. We recognize the need the Board has to manage the stock of school buildings.
5. We recognize that engaged parents help improve the focus on education for our children.
6. We concur that parents and the community should be engaged in addressing the issues facing the School Board
7. Establishing new school communities would be the last option to consider North of Smokey.

PROPOSED OPTION

Reconfigure North Highlands and Cape Smokey from Primary to Grade 6 to Primary to Grade 8 school facilities and reconfigure Cabot Junior Senior High School from Grades 7-12 to Grades 9-12.

INITIAL REACTION

- We are unsure as to why this proposal gained favour over original scenarios.
- The empty space in elementary schools would be transferred to Cabot.
- There would be costly changes required in two schools if this proposal was adopted.
- We have concern about time frame to add program spaces to elementary schools.
- We do not see what benefit our students would derive from such a change.
- This appears to be about money.
- We have been working hard to establish new school communities since 2000.
- Prior to the construction of Cabot Junior Senior High School , students of Junior High and early High School years were taught in local community school before completing Senior High school at Baddeck Academy or some other High School or Vocational School.
- There is a recognition that enrolment decline is slow but continuous in schools North of Smokey

WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS OF THIS PROPOSAL?

- Keeping the grade 7 and grade 8 students in elementary environment means they closer to home.
- The excess capacity in the elementary schools would be decreased.
- Most of the students would have a shorter bus ride.
- We would be following the same model as other schools if the P-5, 6-8 and / or P-8 - 9-12 model was to be implemented.
- This proposal places larger numbers of students in the P-3 schools thus reducing excess capacity that will be a consideration in building a strong case for retention of these schools at the end of the initial lease.

WHAT ARE THE WEAKNESSES OF THIS PROPOSAL?

- The cost of the physical changes to both elementary schools would need to be incurred
- Tech. Ed (as we know it) would not be available to students in elementary settings.
- Negative influence of Junior High aged students on elementary students. (e.g. experimenting with smoking)

- Daily cafeteria meals offered at Cabot would be lost to grade 7 and grade 8 students under this proposal.
- There would be a loss of direct access to the Youth Health Center as well as services from external Agencies such as Mental Health and Addictions for grade 7 and 8 students.
- Combined classes for grade 7/8 students in both elementary school buildings.
- Fewer staff at Cabot would result in less programs/course offerings/teachers working outside their area of academic strength.
- Sport programs could be limited/impacted at all three school facilities.
- Possible increase of on line courses where accessing the technology consistently is a concern.
- Family Studies offerings such as Textiles in grade 7 and Family Nutrition in grade 8 may be in jeopardy.

WHAT ARE THE UNKNOWNNS WITH RESPECT TO THIS PROPOSAL?

- If the new P-5, 6-8 (or P-8) and 9-12 model will be adopted by the School Board?
- What is the anticipated time frame for development and implementation of the plan?
- What is the rationale for the P-8 proposal?
- Would Tech Ed. be offered in the P-8 schools North of Smokey?

WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED TO ASSIST IN GENERATING A RESPONSE?

- We require additional information with respect to the unknownns.

WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS OF THIS PROPOSED OPTION ON THE FOLLOWING:

A) STUDENTS

- There would be shorter bus drives for most grade 7 and 8 students.
- There would be a two year delay for students in becoming part of the Cabot High School Community.
- Fewer interscholastic /interleague sport opportunities would exist for Grade 7 and 8 students.
- Multi-grade groupings at grades 7 and 8 would be a distinct possibility in some years.
- Influence of older students on elementary students in P-8 settings would be present.

B) PROGRAM DELIVERY

- There would be a need to request Government to have P3 partner to cause space to be reconfigured for specialist areas such as Family Studies and Technical Education.
- Physical Education Programs would be carried out in a smaller facility than the one at Cabot.
- Fewer staff at Cabot may reduce staff flexibility in offering programs to students.
- More Virtual School course offerings may be needed to allow for a breadth of options.
- Potential impact on special services (Learning Center and L.D. Programs)

C) COMMUNITY

- All three facilities will continue to be available as venues for community activities.
- New educational communities were established in 2000. These educational communities are continuing to forge new identities (Cape Smokey and North Highlands) in this unique area of the School Board.

D) - STAFFING

- During the 2013-14 school year the teaching staff was as follows:

Cabot	12
Cape Smokey	5
North Highlands	4

In addition, each School had one (1) principal.

- Based on existing staffing formulas, the projected teaching staff would be:

Cabot	8
Cape Smokey	7
N. Highlands	6

- In addition, each School has one (1) principal

- Staffing numbers would be similar to 2013-14 but redistributed among the three facilities.

E) TIME TABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

This proposal could only be implemented following the reconfiguration of some specialty areas as noted in the Program Delivery area.

A decision on grade level configuration would need to be made by the Board.

The earliest that this proposal could be implemented is for the 2015-16 school year.

WHAT COSTS ARE INVOLVED FOR THIS PROPOSED OPTION

1) OPERATING

Based on 2012-13 operating costs, the following operating costs are projected:

Cabot	296,000
Cape Smokey	172,000
North Highlands	185,000

As all three existing facilities are projected to continue operating, no saving in operating costs would be realized if this proposal was implemented.

2) CAPITAL

This proposal would require the reconfiguration of some existing spaces within each of the current elementary facilities. The Tech and multi Media center adjacent to the Library would be utilized as the Tech. Ed. classroom; the learning resource space would double as the Family Studies classroom; the music room would also be used as the Art Room. One of the existing classroom spaces would house grade 7 students (if the grade 7 and grade 8 students were housed separately. A second classroom would be reconfigured into a science classroom and used to house the Grade 8 students if the groups were split. There would be no addition to the building.

The capital cost to achieve the necessary reconfiguration and equip the rooms would be

approximately \$250,000.00 for each school.

3) TRANSPORTATION

Grade 7 and grade 8 students from Meat Cove, Capstick, Bay St. Lawrence, St. Margaret's Village, Bay Road Valley, and Sugar Loaf would have a shorter bus ride to school if this proposal was implemented. Grade 7 and grade 8 students living along the Cabot Trail from Big Interval to Cape North would experience a bit shorter bus ride to North Highlands than to Cabot High School. The same holds true for students from Dingwall.

Grade 7 and grade 8 students from Neil's Harbour would experience a longer bus ride to Cape Smokey than to Cabot if this proposal was adopted.

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL 1

ORIGINAL PROPOSAL

Reconfigure North Highlands Elementary and Cape Smokey Elementary Schools from Primary to Grade 6 facilities to Primary to grade 8 school facilities and reconfigure Cabot Junior / Senior High School from a grade 7-12 school to a grade 9-12 school.

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL

To recommend the retention of both Cape Smokey Elementary School and North Highlands Elementary School as primary to grade 6 school facilities as the P3 lease renewal process is being considered. (Original Scenario # 4) This also implies that Cabot Junior Senior High School would remain a grade 7-12 school.

RATIONALE FOR ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL 1

As the Family of Schools Student Accommodation Study Group for Victoria North, we have determined that the proposal provided by the Board (North Highlands and Cape Smokey become Primary to grade 8 while Cabot changes to a grade 9-12 school) is not ideal for our communities. Although we identified both pros and cons for the proposal the cons outweigh the pros and as a consequence we content that it would be more beneficial for our students North of Smokey to continue to be educated in the three schools as they are currently structured.

Over the past 20 years our communities responded positively to the Board when proposals were put forth to close local consolidated community schools in favour of new P3 schools that would benefit our students. The result was Cape Smokey Elementary which serves students from Smokey Mountain to White Point and North Highlands which serves students from Smelt Brook to Meat Cove. Initially, this was a difficult concept for our small communities to get use to but after 14 years of working together relationships are forming and students are growing together.

Being in rural Cape Breton and located in the North, we feel that Cabot Junior Senior High School has programs in place that benefit our grade 7 and grade 8 students. These programs would be difficult to offer in a school setting more suited for elementary age students. Principal Barb Costello and her Staff have

worked diligently to have an accessible Youth Health Center available for the students of junior senior high school age as they face the challenges associated with becoming young adults.

Cabot administration and staff have been successful in establishing a Learning Center and gaining access to an LD Program. The grades 7 and grade 8 students may not have access to Technical Education or any of these programs and services if they are relocated to Elementary School settings. Students in grade 7 and grade 8 situations at North highlands and Cape Smokey would most likely be in multi graded classes because of low enrolment whereas at Cabot they are instructed in single graded classes.

We feel we are in a unique situation with respect to our location and the distances from school to school. These unique features have been recognized in the new Hogg Funding Formula as all three schools currently qualify for funding under the new formula. The Board's proposal seems to suggest that we fill two schools at the expense of emptying another.

Programs will not suffer should we maintain the existing structure as we will have the same number of students and teachers shared among us but in different spaces. With new program initiatives coming from the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, we believe we would be better positioned to provide these programs and services to all the students served by the three schools if the existing organizational structure was maintained.

Student Accommodation Study Group Draft Report
Victoria North Family of Schools
Public Input Session

Cabot High School

December 2, 2014

Participants: 19

Participants involved in the public input session in response to the Student Accommodation Study Group Draft Report for the Victoria North Family of Schools made input on ten (10) themes.

1. Declining Enrolment

One participant noted that declining enrolment could impact both the future sustainability of schools North of Smokey and the ability of the Board to staff the schools appropriately.

Two individuals noted the population, while declining, was declining at a rate lower than previously experienced.

Two individuals noted that the enrolment decline was greater in other Families of Schools and greater focus on those areas should be undertaken by the Board.

2. Curriculum Offerings in a P-8 Instructional Setting

Three participants spoke to the matter of curriculum delivery in a P-8 setting North of Smokey.

One questioned how Tech Ed and Family Studies would be delivered in P-8 settings.

A second individual indicated that it was not clear as to why a change to P-8 method was being advocated North of Smokey.

A third individual expressed concern about delivering Junior High curriculum in a double graded situation.

3. Program Spaces

Two individuals questioned the wisdom of spending resources on expanding program spaces in the elementary schools if the P-8 model was adopted.

One of the two speakers wondered if the building would be added to in order to provide appropriate program spaces.

4. Community

One individual spoke to the history of the communities North of Smokey and the efforts of community members to accept a need for, and establish new school communities, at the elementary school level.

5. Transportation

One individual spoke, passionately, about the transportation challenges that exist North of Smokey and the potential impact/barrier transportation would have on Grade 7 and Grade 8 students if they were housed in an elementary setting in Asby Bay and Ingonish.

6. P3 Leases

One individual questioned how and when P3 leases would be re-negotiated. Concern was expressed with respect to the impact of falling enrolment on the renewal of the lease for the two elementary schools.

7. Student Services

Three individuals spoke to the potential loss of services to students at Cabot High if the Grade 7 and 8 students were accommodated in the elementary settings.

One individual noted that, while all three schools North of Smokey have cafeterias, only Cabot operates on a daily basis providing food service choices to students between Grades 7-12. This individual was concerned that enrolment reduction caused by retention of Grade 7 and 8 students at the elementary school sites could jeopardize the future daily operation of the Cabot cafeteria.

Another individual spoke to the potential loss of access to the Youth Health Centre and Learning Centre programs/services if Grade 7 and Grad 8 students were housed in the elementary schools under a P-8 setting.

Another individual expressed a strong sentiment that sports teams would suffer as small numbers of students at P-8 sites would prohibit the formation of sports teams at these sites and would destroy the ability of Cabot to participate successfully in some sports at the regional or provincial level.

8. Staffing Impact at Cabot/P-8 Schools

Concern was voiced by two individuals how staffing of the schools would be impacted under this proposal.

One participant was concerned about the relationship between the funding formula and staffing, and the second was worried about the impact staffing changes would have on the ability of each school to offer programs with trained staff.

9. Funding

Two areas of funding were address in addition to the relationship of funding to staffing noted above.

One participant wondered about the impact of isolated school funding on the Board as noted in the Student Accommodation Study Group report.

Two individuals noted that the board's proposal does not result in any financial saving for the Board.

10. Concluding Statements

Five individuals made statements designed to draw attention to the conclusions reached by the Study Committee and shared with the public as part of their presentation of the draft report.

- a) The existing model of service delivery provides the most appropriate vehicle for the provision of programs and services North of Smokey.
- b) If it is not broken – don't fix it.
- c) The existing model is responsive to the unique needs/situations North of Smokey.
- d) There is no advantage to shift excess capacity from one school to another.
- e) The proposal is a detriment to Cabot High.

Post Public Input Session

There were no additional comments or alternatives.