
RE: Community Schools Alliance

Dear Municipal Colleagues:

On behalf of the founding Executive Committee of the Community Schools Alliance, I am pleased to provide you with the attached resolution and fact sheet.

As a recent AMO president, I have had the opportunity to travel the province and listen to the concerns of Ontario's municipalities. During my travels, I have heard many concerns about the accommodation review committee (ARC) process which was developed by the province to determine which schools in a municipality stay open, which ones get closed and where new schools will be located. In response to these common concerns, the Community Schools Alliance was established.

As municipal leaders, we believe our community schools are vital pieces of our public infrastructure; our schools are as important to our communities as the municipal infrastructure for water, transportation and recreation that we build and maintain. Clearly we would not allow our municipal water systems to be taken away without strong public input into the decision making process. Likewise, we believe municipalities, parents and students should have a strong voice at the table where school accommodation decisions are made. This is especially true considering there are 100 schools in Ontario currently undergoing accommodation reviews and 146 schools closing or recommended to be closed.

While the challenge may be complex, our goal is simple. We are asking the Minister to impose a “smart moratorium”. The goal of the “smart moratorium” is to provide 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 (ARC) 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.

I invite you to assist us with this challenge by encouraging your council to review the attached material and vote in favour of passing the resolution of support.

As well, the Community Schools Alliance has invited Ontario Education Minister Kathleen Wynne to address our inaugural meeting. Please encourage your colleagues to attend this meeting on August 17th from 4:45 PM – 5:30 PM in the Governor General I room - 4th floor, Westin Hotel during the AMO conference in Ottawa.

Yours truly,

Doug Reycraft
Chair, Community Schools Alliance
The Community Schools Alliance encourages your council to adopt the following resolution.

Please forward a copy of your resolution to The Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education, Mowat Block, 900 Bay Street, Toronto, Ontario M7A 1L2, Canada and the Community Schools Alliance, 399 Ridout Street N, London, Ontario, N6A 2P1, reycraft@mdlsx.ca

DRAFT RESOLUTION

WHEREAS communities across Ontario are concerned with the Accommodation Review Committee process and the impact this flawed process has on the socio-economic fabric of our municipalities;

AND WHEREAS many schools are the hubs of their communities, a better accommodation review system is needed to address the educational facility needs of our residents;

AND WHEREAS a system to address the educational facility needs in Ontario must ensure that school boards and municipal councils partner on decisions regarding education infrastructure;

AND WHEREAS greater accountability for school board decisions is needed;

AND WHEREAS a thorough review of the governance model for school accommodation decisions must include an opportunity to appeal these decisions;

AND WHEREAS the accommodation review process should respect and value the input of students, parents, the community and municipality;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Province of Ontario be petitioned to implement a "smart moratorium" on disputed school closings to provide the opportunity for the Ministry of Education, school boards and municipalities to work together to develop policies addressing such issues as planning for declining enrolments, a mutually agreed upon Accommodation Review Committee process, a review of funding to rural and small community schools, and transparency and accountability between municipalities and school boards.
FACT SHEET

BACKGROUND

- The Community Schools Alliance was formed in 2009 by a number of Ontario municipalities concerned with the flawed process used by school boards in making decisions about student accommodation, especially school closures.

GOALS

- The Community Schools Alliance is asking Minister Wynne to support a “smart moratorium” on all school closings that are disputed by municipalities.
- The goal of the smart moratorium is for the Ministry, schools boards and municipalities to work together and develop policies addressing such issues as planning for declining enrolments, a mutually agreed upon Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) 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.
- The development of a municipal appeals mechanism for school board decisions on accommodation.

A BETTER SYSTEM IS NEEDED

- The Community Schools Alliance believes that a better system is needed and should:
  - Ensure that school boards and municipal councils work together on decisions regarding education infrastructure,
  - Provide greater accountability for school board decisions on student accommodation, including school closures,
  - Review the governance model for school board decisions on student accommodation which must include the opportunity to appeal those decisions.
  - Respect and value the input of students, parents, the communities and municipalities during the ARC process.

FOUNDING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Doug Reynaert, Mayor, Southwest Middlesex
- Gary Burroughs, Lord Mayor, Niagara-on-the-Lake
- John R. Wilson, Mayor, Malahide Township
- Jim Collard, Councillor, Niagara-on-the Lake
- Tony Guergis, Warden, Simcoe County
- Doug Shearer, Councillor, Cobalt
- Michael Power, Mayor, Greenstone
- Ron Emond, Mayor, Hastings Highlands
- Allen Taylor, Chair of ROMA

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ALLIANCE MEETING WITH MINISTER WYNNE

- Minister Wynne has been invited to attend the inaugural meeting and discuss the accommodation review process and the impact of this flawed process on the socio-economic fabric of our communities.
- The meeting will be held on August 17th from 4:45 PM – 5:30 PM in the Governor General I room - 4th floor, Westin Hotel during the AMO conference in Ottawa.