



## SUMMARY OF POLICY 409 CONSULTATIONS

### Morna Heights School

### October 2019 – January 2019

Meeting Date & School Name	Numbers Attending	Questions
<p>Morna Heights School October 10, 2019 6:30 pm</p>	<p>48 Community and 2 Principals 6 DEC members 3 District Staff</p>	<p>DEC Chair, Rob Fowler welcomed all in attendance and introduced DEC and District staff. He advised that Council and staff were here to discuss the sustainability of their school. He provided information on the Policy 409 process, including; school sustainability and the eight factors that must be considered to determine sustainability, the public consultation process and Ministerial approval. He advised that the second meeting would take place in November and outlined the many ways to provide feedback to DEC. He advised that the option being considered by DEC is to close Morna Heights School and move students to Saint Rose (K-5 English) in Saint John.</p> <p>Mrs. Watson then provided quick facts on our District, information on our schools including; aging infrastructure, historical enrolments in the District and at Morna Heights School, actual and forecasted enrolments as well as some background information on the school.</p> <p>Mr. John MacDonald, Director of Finance &amp; Administration, reviewed slides on staffing at Morna, the school boundaries for both Morna Heights and Saint Rose, operating expenses, transportation, capital improvements required, and multi-year infrastructure planning.</p> <p>Mr. Paul Smith, Director of Schools for the Saint John Education Centre reviewed the community's involvement with the school including support programs for students as well as the businesses located in/and or supporting the school community, he provided background information on Saint Rose School including school programs, social programs and school trips.</p> <p>Mrs. Watson then reviewed summary slides outlining the criteria that will be considered when determining Morna Height's sustainability.</p>



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	<p>Mr. Fowler clarified that the capital projects listed for Morna by Mr. MacDonald are not all required immediately. He commented that the presentation was not meant to compare schools and noted the staff and parents have many programs and initiatives taking place their school. He advised that feedback could be provided at the second meeting and explained how to send information to the DEC during the process, including the option to email questions to <a href="mailto:asds.schoolreview@nbed.nb.ca">asds.schoolreview@nbed.nb.ca</a> or a letter to Mr. Fowler at the District Office.</p> <p>Mr. Fowler advised that the power point from tonight's meeting will be posted on the ASD-S website.</p> <p>Mr. Fowler then opened the floor to questions on Policy 409. There were none expressed, and the meeting adjourned.</p>
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Meeting Date & School Name	Numbers Attending	Questions
<p>Morna Heights School November 25, 2019 6:30 pm</p>	<p>Approximately 50 family/community members 9 DEC members 4 District staff</p>	<p>DEC Chair, Rob Fowler welcomed everyone to the 2<sup>nd</sup> scheduled 409 sustainability review for Morna Heights School. An explanation was given for the purpose of the meeting; to receive feedback on the proposed closure of the school. He explained that this is not the last chance to provide input and he outlined how feedback could be provided.</p> <p>Mr. Fowler invited Lisa Carter, PSSC Chair to welcome everyone.</p> <p>Five scheduled speakers expressed their opinions on the proposed plan for Morna Heights School. The floor was then opened for further comments after the five submissions were heard. Three non-scheduled speakers followed.</p> <p>The following notes are grouped based on the eight categories below identified within Policy 409 and include information from the District and the points brought forward by speakers at the second meeting.</p> <p><b>Enrolment:</b> ASD-S historical enrolment data shows a 20% drop in the last 15 years (5,555 students) and enrolment has declined by nearly 49% since 2004 (68 students) at Morna Heights. With an enrolment of 69 students in 2018, that number is forecast to increase slightly to 72 by 2023. September 30, 2019 data shows Morna Heights with 72 students.</p> <p>Concerns were raised that 30 students were lost to FI and the question was raised why can't Morna offer FI? The Superintendent was asked to get DEC more information for their January meeting. The District response is that 22 students from Morna Heights zone are now in FI. Schools of this size cannot support two programs. Examples of other small schools with no FI include Belleisle</p>



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	<p>Elementary (136) students and Hammond River Valley (179) students, St. Martins (55) students. Speakers pointed out that surrounding schools are reaching their maximum capacity of students. The Superintendent was asked by DEC to do a 5 year projection for 8 schools in west Saint John and Grand Bay/Westfield to ensure they can accommodate all students from Morna. Speakers stated that Morna enrolment for Kindergarten will be higher next year. School boundaries could be changed and Morna could take the overflow from other schools. Comment was made that enrolment shows declines – this trend seems to coincide with growing FI (in 2017 it came back to grade 1). We are losing students to FI. Suggestion was made that FI students return to Morna and also, send more FI students from other schools to Morna.</p> <p>Comment was made that Morna Kindergarten enrolment is 50% higher than the outgoing grade 5 class.</p> <p>Presenters mentioned that teacher/student ratio is important – it is an incentive for people to come here. Consider grandfathering all students through K-5 so any change begins with new children who come into Kindergarten. ASD-S proposes grandfathering FI students at Grand Bay Primary until they finish Grade 2, Inglewood and Westfield Elementary FI until they finish grade 5, and students now in grades 6 and 7 would be grandfathered at River Valley until they move to high school.</p> <p>One presenter commented that he found the powerpoint and the enrolment numbers misleading.</p> <p>Question was asked what happens when the Monte Cristo Park and Martinon areas open up – where would children attend? To close the school would be short cited as growth is going to happen.</p>
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	<p><b>Health and Safety:</b> There have been on-going air quality concerns (i.e. smell in the gym) and there is no central ventilation system in the school. Potable water is provided as the well water continues to fail the monthly bacteria test. DEC asked the Superintendent to provide information on air quality and water for the January meeting. The District reports that the water at the school is safe for washing hands, but not for drinking. This has been the case for many years, and bottled water continues to be available at the school. Council was advised that any school that is on a well is tested monthly. Two air quality tests were done; first test was done in the gym and adjoining hallway area. The gym tested higher for one type of mold, so further testing was recommended. A second test was done in the gym, in four separate areas. Higher readings were found under the stage area. In particular, a higher concentration of Aspergillus/Penicillium type mold. This is the most common mold spore to appear in indoor air samples. Spore samples up to 500 are considered within the normal range and as high as 1500 may not require any remediation. Our test showed around 900. All mold spores can produce mycotoxins; however, it would be very rare for this type of mold and would not be the norm. As a follow up, items stored under the stage were removed and some items were thrown away due to musty smells. The third test was ordered and we are waiting for results. The water at Morna Heights was tested recently and there is E.coli and chloroform in the water; however, these are not uncommon and do not pose a health risk as long as students do not drink the water. The water is chlorinated at the school level. Public Health requires monthly tests for microbiological agents such as coliform bacteria. If coliform bacteria shows up in the test, then a second test is done for E. Coli which is a species of coliform bacteria. The school consistently fails the test; sometimes E. Coli also shows up as a positive test, sometimes it does not. A fail in the coliform bacteria test means the water cannot be used for consumption unless boiled; therefore, potable water is put in place.</p>
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	<p>Possible options to improve the water were discussed but they would be expensive undertakings and unlikely to change the outcome.</p> <p>Morna Heights School was built in 1963 with a maximum capacity of 145 students; currently it is at 48% capacity. There are a number of repairs required on the school including roof, windows, mechanical and electrical, brick repointing, washrooms, floors and interior accessibility estimated to cost \$1,002,500. There have been no major capital improvements completed at the school over the last five years.</p> <p>Mr. Fowler noted that we prioritize capital projects and EECD selects the top ones. The District does not have a pocket of money that we are choosing not to use for repairs.</p> <p>Concerns were raised about the mental health of the grade 5 children as they were expecting to go to River Valley Middle – they will not feel connected in another school. A decision to close would be emotionally stressful.</p> <p>Comment was made that in 2009 \$14K was spent on new gym ventilation. Although there is chloroform in the water – it is not harmful – and the school uses bottled water.</p> <p>One presenter commented that District information suggests that if the school remains open, there may be some safety risks to students – we must ensure those risks are addressed in the budget. Mr. Fowler clarified that if there was any immediate impact on the health and safety of children, it would be dealt with.</p> <p>Comment was made that Morna is a solution, not a problem. It is the newest building in the area and is not rented.</p> <p><b>Quality of Programs:</b> Both Morna Heights and Saint Rose schools offer strong educational programs. The ASD-S experience has been that</p>
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	<p>community partners will follow students when schools are closed – e.g. Lorne Middle School.</p> <p>There is a Positive Learning Room at the school, playground upgrades were done 2018 and lots of work done on the SIP.</p> <p>Morna offers a breakfast program, intramural sports, movie nights, community enrichment activities, District Jamboree (participation and hosting), PSSC, Helping Hands assemblies, Christmas Shopping Bazaar and skating, to name a few. The school has community support from Derek’s Custom Cabinets, Peter Claessen and Sons Ltd., Ridgewood Veterans Wing, Seely’s Lodge and Subway provides hot lunches.</p> <p>Saint Rose School offers hot lunches, daily breakfast program, safe arrival, Parent Involvement Committee, PSSC, Writers in School Program, Fish Friends, Soap Box Derby, ELF, WOW Writers, to name a few.</p> <p>Home and School at Morna is very active – organizing hot lunches 3 days a week, they have a milk program. Many fundraisers and 100% goes back to student activities. Many activities are parent/staff led – Walk for Autism, Mother’s Day Tea, Ice Cream Field Day, Playground Project and Winter Carnival.</p> <p><b>Transportation:</b> The boundaries of both schools border on each other and can be combined for transportation purposes. Two buses currently serve Morna (2 AM and 2 PM routes); there are 18 walkers (6 out of zone) and 46 on the bus. Average distance traveled by bus to Morna is around 4 kms; maximum is 7 kms. Busing to Saint Rose will add an average of 5 kms (maximum of 9 kms) to the bus runs depending upon the student’s home address. All Morna students would be entitled to bus to Saint Rose.</p> <p>Comment was made that children will have to wait longer and it is a concern in the winter – students</p>
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	<p>cannot walk to Saint Rose, and often roads are flooded in the winter and spring. It would require extra buses for 2 years to grandfather students.</p> <p>It was suggested that the boundaries be looked at to bring more students to Morna.</p> <p><b>Finances:</b> As noted in the District’s power point presentation, there are currently 6.90 full time equivalents staffing the school. The total yearly operating costs are \$837,229 including salaries. Future savings for repair projects totals \$1M.</p> <p>The Saint John Education Centre has 30 buildings to maintain and have education, facilities and IT staff support for each school. The DEC requested further information for our January meeting on cost savings if Morna was to close. The District advised that ASD-S keeps savings for one budget year after a school is closed, then the budget is removed. The most important cost savings going forward would be that the building is closed and is one less we are required to maintain and facilities staff, IT staff and others would have more time to spend in other schools.</p> <p>Comment was made that the cost for projects listed for the school are inflated from the last time, operating costs are not high, and that if windows were fixed, the heating costs may not be as high.</p> <p>One presenter noted that it seems that finances are prominent – Morna has 0.7% of the budget, assuming all capital projects go ahead next year. It should not be a financial decision – this is a complex social decision that has some financial implications.</p> <p><b>Community Impact:</b> The enrolment at Morna Heights has continued to decline to the point where nearby schools can absorb the population of the school. Morna is located within the city of Saint John boundaries as is Saint Rose School.</p>
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	<p>Comment was made that this is the third sustainability review, the school is the focal part of the community. They are on 8 acres of land and the school was built in 1963 with plans to add a second floor. They have two modulars (25 years old) which are used for the library and music, and a gym. Speakers feel the impact on the community is great – people move here wanting a small community school and people worry about their property values if a school closes.</p> <p>One presenter commented that the District suggests a minimal impact with closure – the community is broader than municipal boundaries and includes Martinon, Morna, Grand Bay-Westfield.</p> <p><b>Impact on Other Schools:</b> Morna Heights would be closed and the students moved to Saint Rose School for K-5 and then Barnhill Middle for 6-8. River Valley Middle would see a decrease in their future enrolment because of this change.</p> <p><b>Economic Impact:</b> No impact noted by the District. Closure of the school may lead to less interest in families with younger children staying or moving into the area.</p> <p>Comment was made that the closure would be a huge loss to economic development. Real estate sales are booming.</p> <p>M. Fowler reminded attendees that feedback could still be provided to the DEC and provided information on how to do so. He stated that community impact is a factor and will keep DEC thinking about the decision. Mr. Fowler thanked all for attending.</p>
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