



**Blind River Public School  
Accommodation Review Committee (ARC)  
First Public Meeting**



Location: Blind River Public School - Gym  
Date: Monday, March 6, 2017  
Time: 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm

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**Attendance:** 28 public attendees completed the sign-in sheet

**Welcome & Introduction of ARC**

- Principal Ellis Nyman welcomed and introduced the Accommodation Review Committee (ARC) and reviewed the agenda for the evening.

**ARC Members**

Brent Vallee	Superintendent of Education (ADSB)
Ellis Nyman	Principal (BRPS)
Tanya Mitchell	Chair of School Council (BRPS)
Mayor Sue Jensen	Municipal Representative (Blind River)
Adrienne Edwards	Staff Member (SJD)
Melanie Lees	Community Member (Blind River)

**Other Board Staff**

Joe Santa Maria	Superintendent of Business
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**1. Background Information & ARC Process**

**2. School Information Profile**

**3. Initial Staff Report & Recommendation**

- Superintendent of Education Brent Vallee shared a PowerPoint presentation providing Background Information, an overview of the ARC process, the School Information Profile, and the Initial Staff report including recommendations.

**4. Opportunity for Input/Feedback**

**Question:** Why isn't there representation from Eaket on the ARC as it is the school that is potentially taking in students?

**Response:** Representation on the ARC comes from the school undergoing the Accommodation Review Process. WC Eaket would be involved in the Transition process if the recommendation was approved.

**Comment:** A concern was expressed regarding a former ARC process – want to ensure that this is a transparent process and the concerns and views of community members/parents are taken into consideration.

**Question:** Could the minutes from the first ARC meeting be made public?

**Response:** Clarification that this was an orientation meeting focused on a review of the Terms of Reference for Accommodation Review Committees, and review of the initial reports (School Information Profile and Initial Staff Report) generated by the ADSB. No minutes were taken at the meeting.

**Question:** Why isn't there representation from Mississauga First Nation on the ARC?

**Response:** Membership on the ARC was determined based on the process outlined by the Ministry. This does not mean that there isn't input from others, including First Nations. Input from everyone present at the meetings is greatly appreciated.

**Question:** Can we see the profile for Eaket in regards to the FCI (Facility Condition Index)?

**Response:** The FCI can be made available. Declining enrolment is an issue across the ADSB and the province. The ADSB capital plan is shared with the Ministry as we work to "right size" the school system. The Ministry takes into consideration existing structures in the community when looking at funding. The funds are shared amongst all school boards in the province. Putting forward a K-12 model is partly due to the response that the Ministry of Education considers when considering capital funding.

**Question:** Can the renovation of the existing school be an option, taking into consideration the issues that a K-12 school may have?

**Response:** The Ministry generally does not look at funding for schools that are considered "prohibitive to repair". There has been success with a K-12 model in other areas of the ADSB. For example, there are lots of opportunities for older students to work with younger students. There is usually separation between older and younger students within the school, which would take place at W.C. Eaket as well.

**Question:** Were there other communities within the ADSB, with existing elementary schools for other boards, where a K-12 model was presented and did that affect enrollment in that school as a result.

**Response:** To date, we have not experienced a significant decline in enrolment at schools in communities where a K-12 school has been introduced.

**Question:** Would there be additional programming offered in a K-12 school? There is a lot of competition in our school community – our school is losing enrolment to other schools.

**Question:** Would there be an option for a French Immersion Program in order to sustain our enrolment numbers?

**Response:** We examine our programming on an ongoing basis. Consideration could be given to having a French Immersion Program. There may be issues with sustaining a French Immersion program throughout the educational career of a student.

**Comment:** We have heard lots of voice in our community with the suggestion that the French Immersion program be brought back to BRPS.

**Comment:** I wanted to have the option available for French Immersion at BRPS and this was a consideration for enrolling her child at BRPS, because I was a former student at BRPS and had that option.

**Comment:** More numbers equals increased funding – the ADSB should consider the French Immersion program for our school, and this community.

**Comment:** Many of the parents who register their children at the French school are Anglophones but want the option of a French Immersion program available for their children.

**Response:** Numbers would have to be taken into consideration for this option to be available. Parents make decisions on where to register their child based on a variety of considerations – having options available is important.

**Question:** Two elementary schools in our area offer a daycare service in their building and in doing so, it often becomes a natural transition for young students to attend that school. Would it be possible to have partnerships with outside agencies (daycare) to provide this service? Could there potentially be other agencies (library) that would partner with the school, i.e., to have a learning commons area (that all schools can access) in order to provide this service to our community?

**Response:** The DSSAB (District Social Services Administration Board) determines where daycares get placed in our community schools. Every school would welcome a daycare facility. If the community could help to get a daycare in the school, it would be appreciated. Rules surrounding opening a daycare in a school are complicated. The Ministry has a separate budget line for daycares. Daycare facilities have to be operated by non-profit organizations if they are attached to a school. If the board went ahead with a K-12 school, creative ideas to partner with other agencies are welcome (e.g., Discovery Centre at CASS). ADSB believes in partnering with agencies as it makes financial sense for all involved. As far as a learning commons (technology spaces) is concerned, there is also funding available.

**Question:** Does a non-profit daycare exclude salaries?

**Response:** Yes, having paid staff in a daycare does not affect non-profit status.

**Question:** How do you get not-for-profit daycares in a school?

**Response:** It is important to have a partner to provide this service. This is something that could be taken into consideration when retro-fitting W.C. Eaket.

**Question:** Where do we get general ideas about what can be included in a new school?

**Response:** Information is gathered through the accommodation review process. If Ministry of Education funding is approved, an architect works with the ADSB to determine these spaces based on the needs of the community and the school community. Input from school staff members is key in determining the needs/design.

**Question:** There are limitations at W.C. Eaket – the ADSB does not own the land beside Eaket. Have you talked to the town about purchasing the land around Eaket?

**Response:** The town will be consulted to determine site costs and the development of the property (e.g., lease agreement or purchase).

**Comment:** Eaket currently does not have the space – there is a safety concern with the river at the back of the school.

**Response:** Safety is always a primary concern, particularly around water, however, Blind River Public School is situated on the water as well. Currently both buildings are at 35% capacity.

**Question:** Have you had conversations with the town regarding the park area?

**Response:** There has been discussion in the past regarding the use of the park area.

**Comment:** In regards to representation from the First Nations' community, wouldn't it be beneficial to have representation from First Nations to bring their added input to the Ministry of Education? Include us in the discussion in order to bring our point of view to the Ministry as well. The population of First Nations' students is increasing.

**Question:** Space is an issue at Eaket – is Adult Education remaining at Eaket? Is municipal representation based on where the school is located?

**Response:** When looking at a new design, consideration could be given to having Adult Education housed elsewhere. Yes, municipal representation is based on where the school is located.

**Comment:** The K – 12 school is a good option, and there doesn't seem to be a lot of opposition to it. It just has to be done right.

**Response:** Agreed. Feedback is required as part of the process.

**Question:** In a K-12 situation, are there different timetables?

**Response:** Every situation is unique as each of our sites has a different design. Students are not allowed to wander from into other areas of the school and this has not typically been an issue. In some K-12 schools, separation is done by having two floors.

**Question:** Are they going to build “upper levels” at the Eaket site? Some parents are nervous about this change.

**Response:** We are leaving that open to discussion. Perhaps we can have someone from a K-12 school share information and share their perspective about a K-12 school at the next meeting.

**Question:** The transition is slated for the 2018/19 school year. Our school has good sports teams, etc. Will W.C. Eaket be ready to accommodate the students for the 2018/19 school year when sharing the gymnasium?

**Response:** We believe so, due to previous experience working with this type of situation, we have insight into the process in order to facilitate the transition.

**Comment:** With the grade 7/8 situation at CASS, the gym wasn’t completed on time.

**Response:** With the 7 and 8 students going to CASS, it wasn’t necessary to complete the new gymnasium prior to the move. The addition of the K – 6 component at the CASS site allowed the board to have further conversation with the Ministry.

**Comment:** The gymnasium wasn’t ready when the grade 7 and 8 students went to CASS. It was in the plan, but it didn’t happen in time. Promises were made, but weren’t delivered.

**Response:** We are prepared to move forward, however, timelines may change. The transition date is also subject to construction time which may change the timeline as put forth by the ADSB.

**Question:** The timeline seems tight. Are we looking at a “ready to go” facility?

**Response:** 2018/19 would be an aggressive timeline, but it starts the conversation with the Ministry to push forward the recommendation. Rural communities seem to benefit more from Ministry funding and we don’t want to lose the opportunity for funding if there is a change in the government. We have to be ready to take advantage of funding to create better spaces for the community. The transition date is also subject to construction time which may change the timeline as put forth by the ADSB.

**Comment:** There are mixed views from students at Eaket regarding a K-12 school – some good and bad influences. There is no cafeteria at Eaket – could this be addressed through this process so we can sort out this issue?

**Response:** Eaket has had both private cafeteria operators, and food services management operators in the past. They have had to pull out due to financial considerations. We are open to a discussion regarding funding for a cafeteria.

**Question:** Is it going to be one principal or two?

**Response:** Different models currently exist at different sites. Chapleau has a P/VP (150 students), Hornepayne has a P/VP (110-120 students). CASS and CAES have

approximately 500-600 students with a P/VP at CASS (7 – 12) and a principal in the elementary school. Decision is based on the numbers and needs at each site.

**Question:** Is it possible to have the 7/8 students transfer to Eaket and have a K-6 school at this site?

**Response:** Trustees make the final decision in regard to the recommendation. Recommendations are based in part on the funding that can be secured. Funding is based on what is best from an infrastructure standpoint for the province and the community. A K-6 model would entail demolishing part of the existing structure. It is cheaper to demolish an entire building, rather than try to retrofit the existing school, i.e., move boilers and electrical into a different part of the building, which would increase funding costs. The question would be, “is that the best use of community dollars?” When you have an existing space that could be renovated and is far below capacity, it would make it difficult to secure funding for this option.

**Question:** What happens to this building after the students are gone?

**Response:** Difficult to say at this point. Would the community have use for the building, or would another educational body come into the school? Properties have been sold, but it can be difficult to find a buyer for a single-purpose facility and it can be difficult to re-purpose school buildings.

**Question:** Eaket was built in 1958. How much capital has to be put into that building that is already 60 or 70 years old? Would it make more sense to have a central hub rather than retrofitting another school?

**Response:** Is there property in the town that could be utilized for a new school?

**Question:** Would there be a separate entrance for the younger students?

**Response:** Yes, this has been done at other sites.

**Question:** There are different scenarios for housing K-12 students at Eaket, e.g., bottom floor for K-6, top floor for 7 – 12 students, however, all of the technology is currently on the main floor.

**Response:** There are pods of money that could be used potentially for a new school, or to retrofit other buildings – although this can’t be promised. Students are often given the opportunity to come up with design plans.

**Question:** Would resources be shared between the schools, i.e., special education needs – would EAs be shared?

**Response:** Some different models in each site. In Chapleau and Hornepayne, EAs are assigned to the K-12 building, in Central Algoma there are separate allocations for the elementary, intermediate, and secondary student populations. This is based on numbers and needs.

**Question:** Is there an opportunity to build a school in this existing site?

**Response:** Currently, W.C. Eaket is underutilized. The Ministry would consider the fact that there is still an underutilized school in the area if we were to make this recommendation.

**Question:** In terms of property location for a new school, the town has a baseball diamond by the old mill – it is designated as park space. There would also be a track accessible to a new school. It is very close to green space, is road accessible, and is also close to the community centre. This is land that the town owns. Is it possible to sell the Eaket property?

**Response:** ADSB has sold properties with buildings on them in the past. Single purpose buildings are often difficult to sell. The size of the building limits potential buyers and it is difficult to repurpose school buildings. We don't want to build false hope for a new building and although the ADSB can move forward with pursuing the suggestion, the Ministry may have a differing opinion.

**Question:** When would the investigation into building a potential new school be considered?

**Response:** We could bring the option forward as soon as possible as the Ministry knows we are going through this process. They also know that the capital application process is linked to W.C. Eaket. After the accommodation review meetings conclude, this may be considered.

**Question:** Will there be a “visual” plan of what W.C. Eaket would look like to accommodate the students?

**Response:** The ARC process is designed to provide input as to the best options to bring forward for the school and community. Specific design options are usually developed once the trustees have voted on the recommendations.

**Question:** The accommodation review process always seem to be about opposition. This isn't the case in this community. We need to move forward with the recommendation including a vision for the new school. Can we not have our own committee to look at the design options?

**Response:** You can bring forward ideas, although this has not been done in previous ARC meetings. We want to respect the process but move forward with design options. If the decision is made by June, we can be prepared so that we can come up with options. The ARC process must consider options. For example, if trustees only approved a new build, but the Ministry doesn't support this, there won't be a gain for the community. If the funding dries up in the interim, there won't be any movement forward.

**Question:** If we pushed through a clear mandate, will that help the Ministry make the decision?

**Response:** Yes, this goes through the ARC process. Over the next few months we will keep lines of communication open to seek input from the school and the community needs.

**Comment:** While a new school may be the choice, we still have to consider the underutilization at W.C. Eaket.

**Question:** The town park is utilized for many events and activities. What if the town opposes selling this property to the ADSB?

**Response:** Partnerships are necessary. It may contribute to a new track for the community, as an example. This is a reality of the process – some options may not be feasible.

**Question:** Will you be accommodating all classrooms and programs (FSL, Cultural Room) that are currently in place at BRPS?

**Response:** Yes

**Comment:** Considering that Eaket has the same utilization as BRPS, why not do a review of W.C. Eaket? It would be great to have them as part of the review – everyone would be on the same train of thought to look at what is best for the community.

**Question:** Are you looking at involving the First Nations in the process?

**Response:** This is potentially an oversight on the part of the ADSB – we want to include First Nations in the process.

**5. Adjournment - next public meeting to take place in early May**