



THE GREATER ESSEX COUNTY DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**MEMORANDUM TO: CHAIRPERSON
AND MEMBERS OF THE BOARD**

**FROM: WARREN KENNEDY, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND
TERRY LYONS, SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION:
ACCOMMODATIONS**

**SUBJECT: PROGRAM AND ACCOMMODATION REVIEW FOR
FORSTER FAMILY OF SCHOOLS AND CENTURY
SECONDARY SCHOOL**

DATE: OCTOBER 16, 2012

In accordance with the Ministry of Education Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines of June 2009, and after consideration of the report of the Program and Accommodation Review Committee posted on the Greater Essex County District School Board's website on June 15, 2012, and presented at the special meeting of the board on June 20, 2012, Administration's recommendations for the Forster Family of Schools and Century Secondary School have been determined.

Background:

At the October 18, 2011 regular meeting of the Board, Trustees approved the following recommendation:

THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCOMMODATIONS CONDUCTS A PARC STUDY OF THE FORSTER FAMILY OF SCHOOLS AND INCLUDE CENTURY DUE TO ITS GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION TO:

- i. ADDRESS CAPACITY ISSUES AND AGING INFRASTRUCTURE NEEDS WITHIN THE FORSTER FAMILY OF SCHOOLS
- ii. CONTINUE OUR INVESTIGATION FOR A PERMANENT FRENCH IMMERSION SITE, IN ACCORDANCE WITH BOARD DIRECTION FROM THE SOUTH WINDSOR PARC.

The Superintendent responsible for accommodation studies is Terry Lyons. In December 2011, the Board appointed a Program and Accommodation Review Committee (PARC) comprised of parents, community members, school staff and administration as outlined in the Ministry of Education Pupil Accommodation Review Guidelines of June 2009.

Rationale:

The Forster family of schools continues to operate well under capacity with only one school, Dougall, operating above 85% utilization. Enrolment projections show that utilization rates will continue to remain low for the next ten years and even decline despite the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK). Additionally, two of the schools within the Forster Family of Schools (FFOS), Forster and Marlborough, are in poor condition and have significant renewal needs. Realizing that the

Board receives 4.5 million dollars per year to address building renewal for the entire system, addressing the needs within the FFOS will prove challenging.

Methodology:

- Committee comprising of school personnel, parents and community members was approved by trustees in December of 2011
- Regular Meetings with committee, February 16, March 22, March 28, April 23, April 30, May 22.
- Identification and analysis of data and related information required
- Development of enrolment projection charts based on October 31, 2011 enrolment data
- Development of charts and maps for possible new boundary recommendations
- Development of a link from each school's website directly to the PARC icon on the GECDsB website
- Minutes of meetings posted to the Board website in a timely fashion
- Keeping each school community informed via School Council meeting reports, school newsletter articles, and community information letters
- Community information meetings to apprise the community of the study's recommendations.
- Letters, distributed via students, to families of each school in the study
- Meetings with school staff of impacted schools

Resources:

- The 2011 Accommodation Planning Report
- School enrolment projection charts based upon October 31, 2011 enrolment figures
- Consultation with school principals, D. Garlick, K. Sweet, P. Oshar, C. Inverarity, C. Callow, R. Brown, D. Laforet
- Consultation with respective School Council Chairs
- General consultation with the community via school newsletters, community meetings, and feedback/input from the community
- Development of an e-mail link as an additional method of collecting community input
- Consultation with the Student Transportation Services Consortium
- Consultation with Facility Services staff
- Consultation with Process Planning Associates Inc.
- Ongoing consultation and dialogue with the respective Family of Schools Superintendents, J. Howitt and S. Pyke
- Ongoing consultation and dialogue with the Superintendents of Special Education, S. Pyke
- Ongoing consultation and dialogue with Diversity Officer, R. Olivero

Considerations of the Study:

- To endeavour to reduce the number of empty student spaces in the schools
- To improve utilization rates within the school family
- Current infrastructure and renewal needs
- To enhance student programming
- To develop a plan for the relocation of students with the least amount of disruption, where possible
- To consider physical dividers (major arteries, railways, etc.)
- To be fiscally responsible, in consideration of student transportation issues
- To recognize the impact of transportation (school bus) routes

ANALYSIS:

The Greater Essex County District School Board is responsible for operating and maintaining its schools as effectively and efficiently as possible, with an emphasis on programming that will support student achievement. When a PARC is initiated, all schools identified become part of the review and as a result may have their accommodation status changed. The original mandate of the PARC was to examine all the schools within the Forster Family, and include Century Secondary School, because of its geographical location.

Towards the end of the 2010-11 school year, trustees approved a recommendation for a facility to accommodate the Benson and Taylor communities at the Taylor site. Planning is well underway for this new facility and it was determined by the PARC committee that Benson and Taylor Schools would not factor into a solution. Dougall also would be unable to play a part in the outcome, as the school continues to operate near capacity.

As the Program and Accommodation Review Committee (PARC) embarked on the task and reviewed all of the schools identified within the PARC, the following challenges emerged:

1. **Significant renewal needs and some aging infrastructure**
2. **Low utilization rates**
3. **Projected enrolments to remain low over the next 15 years**
4. **Current situation cannot sustain**

GENERAL

The Forster Family of Schools is comprised of 6 schools; J.L. Forster Secondary School, J.E. Benson Public School, General Brock Public School, Dougall Avenue Public School, Marlborough Public School and Dr. H.D. Taylor Public School. All of the schools in the family are located within close proximity to each other with Century Secondary School situated in the vicinity (Fig #1 & Fig #2).

School	Forster	Marlborough	Brock	Century	Taylor	Benson	Dougall
Forster		1.2	.85	1.9	2.3	2.0	3.5
Marlborough	1.2		1.68	1.1	1.51	3.0	4.5
Brock	.85	1.68		2.6	3.0	2.31	4.0
Century	1.9	1.1	2.6		.9	2.3	3.8
Taylor	2.3	1.51	3.0	.9		1.22	3.1
Benson	2.0	3.0	2.31	2.3	1.22		1.45
Dougall	3.5	4.5	4.0	3.8	3.1	1.45	

Fig #1

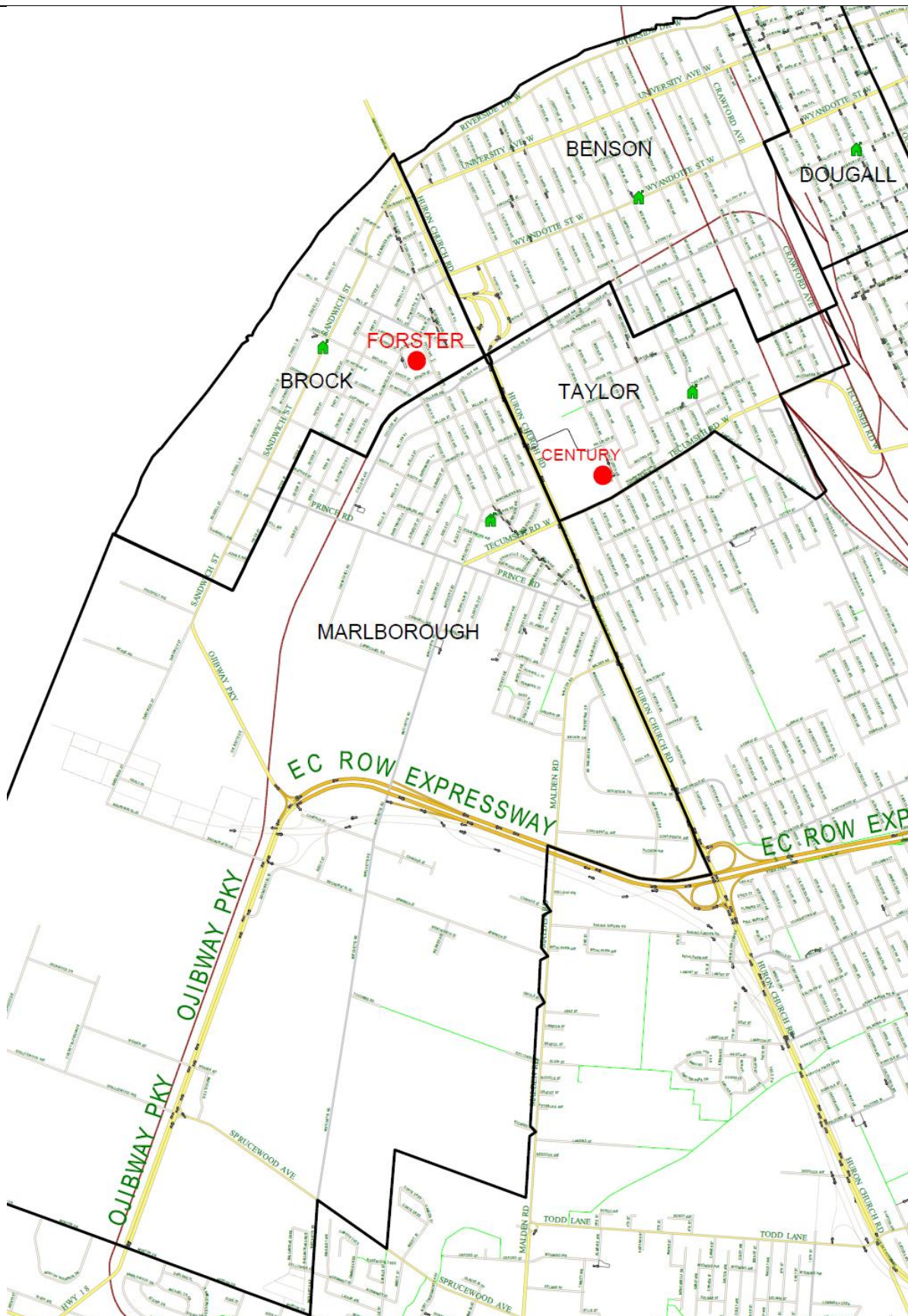


Fig #2

ENROLMENT REVIEW

New home development is not anticipated within the Forster area and empty student spaces and renewal needs continue to be a concern within this family of schools. Significant patterns of declining enrolment have been moderated with the implementation of Full Day Kindergarten (FDK) but are still a reality. Enrolment patterns may be the result of immigration changes but could be a reflection of the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC).

J.L. Forster Secondary School continues to face challenges with respect to enrolment and utilization. There are close to 500 empty student spaces resulting in a utilization rate of 47%. The current enrolment is 474 students and projected to decline into the future. Of the 474 students for the 2011/12 school year, 35% were enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) program. The school also houses a Skills to Enhance Personal Success (STEPS) program, with an enrolment of 11 students.

The inclusion of the ESL secondary students from across the city has bolstered Forster's population. Figure #3 depicts the locations from which ESL students travel to currently attend Forster. A red "x" does not represent the quantity of individuals just the location of a pupil or pupils.

Forster Secondary School, without the increased enrolment support of the English as a Second Language program, requires consideration for alternate programming to best support student access to educational opportunities. In schools with capacity issues, programming is challenged when insufficient numbers of students are enrolled for a specific program.

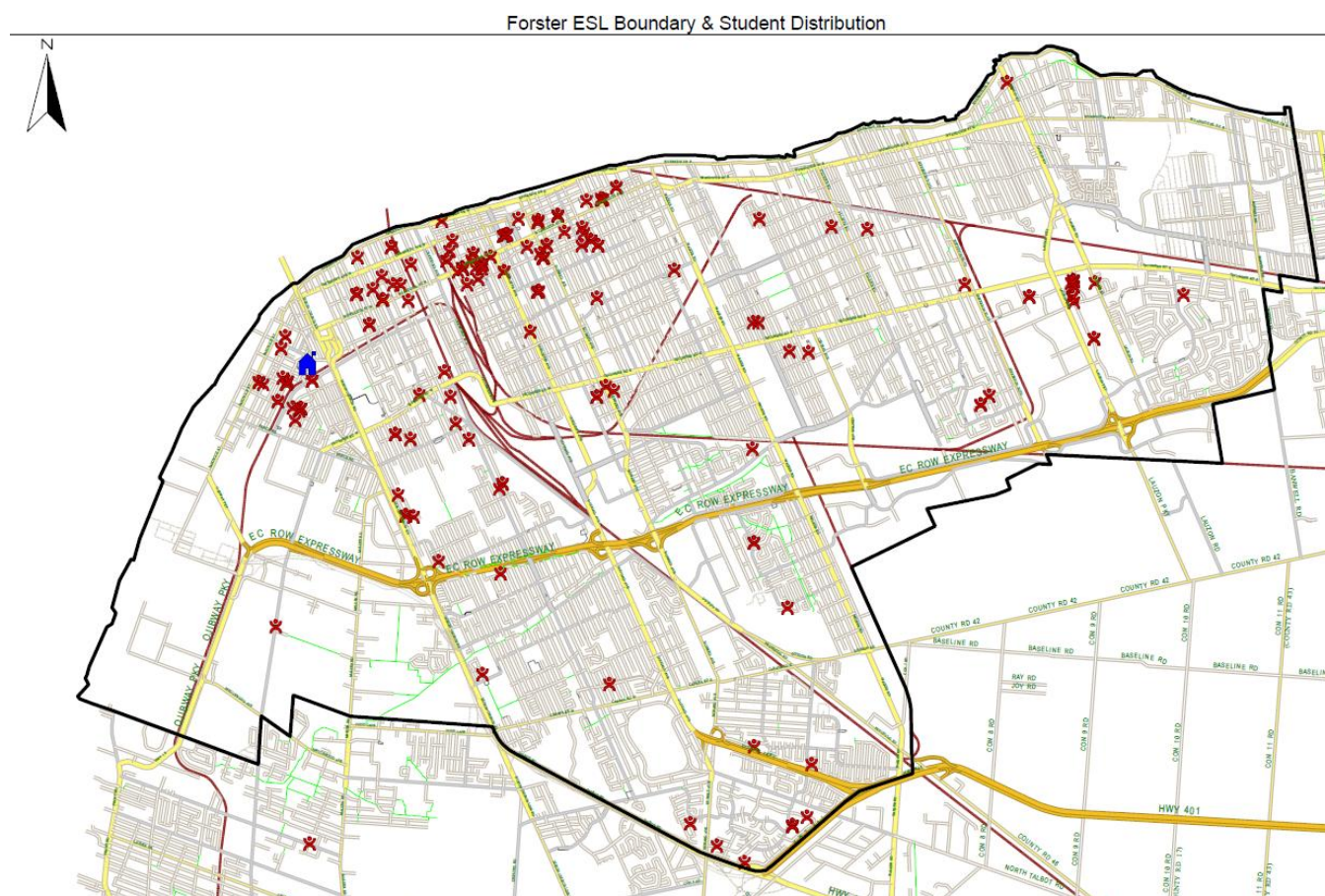


Fig #3

A Program and Accommodation Review of J.E. Benson and Dr. H. D. Taylor Schools was completed at the end of the 2010-11 school year. Trustees approved the recommendation for a facility to accommodate the Benson and Taylor communities at the Taylor site. Planning is well under way for the construction of the new school. The Prohibitive to Repair grants assigned to Benson School in 2003 will greatly assist towards the funding of this project. The new school will provide a viable and sustainable enrolment and reduce the Board's renewal needs significantly.

With the implementation of FDK at General Brock School, there was an increase in enrolment which should stabilize into the near future. An enrolment of slightly over 300 students with an 80% utilization rate is anticipated over the next few years.

Marlborough School is a very old building with significant renewal needs. In September of 2011 the implementation of FDK created a slight increase in enrolment, but the utilization rate will stabilize at approximately 70% for the next 10 years. Plans continue to have students in the building for the foreseeable future. The school's attendance district is quite large, extending well to the south of the school's location, close to some LaSalle and South Windsor schools. Housing development and implications of the Detroit River International Crossing (DRIC) outcome will have to be closely monitored so that future appropriate accommodation planning can take place.

Dougall Public School's enrolment is stable and projected to remain near 80% over the next decade.

Enrolment at both of the Board's vocational schools, Century and Western continues to decline as locally developed courses are introduced in our secondary schools. Century's pattern of declining enrolment is projected to continue. A utilization rate of less than 50% is predicted within the next five years. It is currently a "magnet school" drawing students from the entire city.

Vocational schools were built with specialized facilities (kitchens, auto body, etc.) to serve those students primarily interested in moving directly into the work world and have provided unique opportunities for students to develop the required skills. As the current philosophy of delivering curriculum in education recognizes differentiated instruction within a students' home school, consideration must be given to reviewing the model of program delivery.

Fig #4 depicts current enrolments within the FFOS as well as Century. Utilization rates will continue to decline based on Ontario School Information System (OnSIS) numbers submitted to the Ministry of Education last October. Although the Board has experienced a higher than expected enrolment at the elementary level this September, this has not materialized within the FFOS. In fact, early indications suggest that the projections in Fig #4 may be slightly inflated.

ENROLMENT PROJECTIONS						
YEAR	Forster	Marlborough	Brock	Dougall	TOTAL (Utilization)	Century
2011	474	390	313	331	1,508 65%	421 52%
2012	438	381	319	351	1,489 64%	389 48%
2013	378	385	322	337	1,422 61%	372 46%
2014	353	397	327	333	1,410 61%	362 45%
2015	397	395	331	317	1,440 62%	367 49%
2016	354	408	332	300	1,394 60%	355 44%

Data based on Oct 31st Onsis Actuals

Fig #4

Therefore, it is firmly believed that Fig #5, depicting a continued declining utilization rate and shrinking enrolment is accurate.

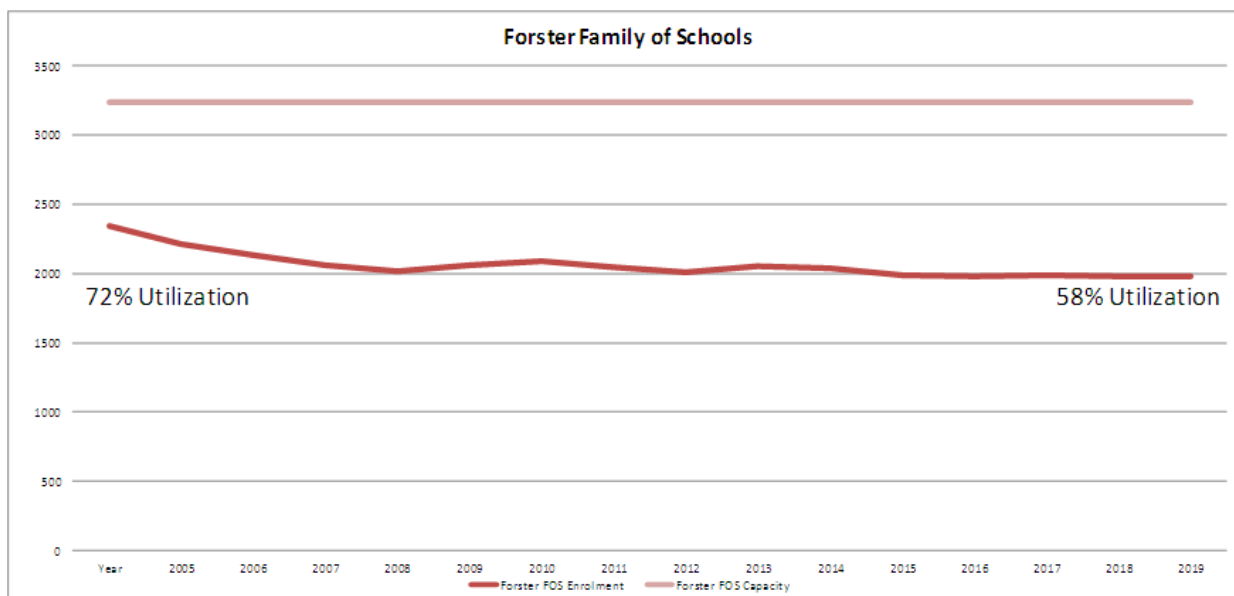


Fig #5

When we examine the current number of empty seats within the FFOS and Century (Fig #6), there are approximately 816 and 380 respectively. At an operational cost of approximately \$1000 per student, this translates into the Board spending 1.2 million dollars a year to maintain empty student spaces. This expenditure will continue to grow as the number of empty spaces increases.

RENEWAL NEEDS

In addition to the challenges associated with declining enrolment, the Forster Family of Schools and Century have significant renewal needs, compounded by aging infrastructure. In terms of building infrastructure, with the exception of the new consolidated Taylor/Benson School, over 43% of the building additions are more than 60 years old, with another 44% in excess of 50 years old and 10% older than 40 years. The renewal needs for Forster, Marlborough and Century alone are over 39 million dollars (Fig #6). Senior administration strongly believes that this situation is not sustainable.

FORSTER PARC					
School	OTG	Enrolment	Utilization Rate	Renewal Needs	Site Acreage
Forster (age = 1958)	993	474	47%	\$ 10,604,806 19,396,650	9.1
Marlborough (age = 1951)	560	390	68%	\$ 5,533,166 8,018,850	8.3
Brock (age = 1998)	380	313	76%	\$ 288,587	2.9
Dougall (age = 1992)	391	331	92%	\$ 789,672	.64
Total	2,324	1,508 316 empty seats	65%	17,216,231	
Century (age = 1978)	801	421 380 empty seats	52%	\$ 5,393,109 12,004,650	7.57

Fig #6

THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION RECOMMENDS:

- 1. THE CLOSURE OF FORSTER SECONDARY SCHOOL EFFECTIVE JUNE 2014 AND DECLARING IT SURPLUS TO THE BOARD'S NEEDS. STUDENTS WILL BE TRANSITIONED TO CENTURY SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR SEPTEMBER 2014.**

CONSIDERATIONS:

It is a difficult decision to recommend the closure of any school. Recommending the closure of Forster Secondary School is not a criticism of the people in that building. Senior administration firmly believes that excellence is all encompassing in every building in the Board. We must make some difficult decisions in an attempt to ensure that excellence throughout the system is to be maintained.

Century Secondary School would become a community high school offering programming to meet the needs of all current students and transitioned students. The English as a Second Language Program would transition to Century.

In Fig #7, some of the key elements considered in making this recommendation are outlined. By no means is it an exhaustive list.

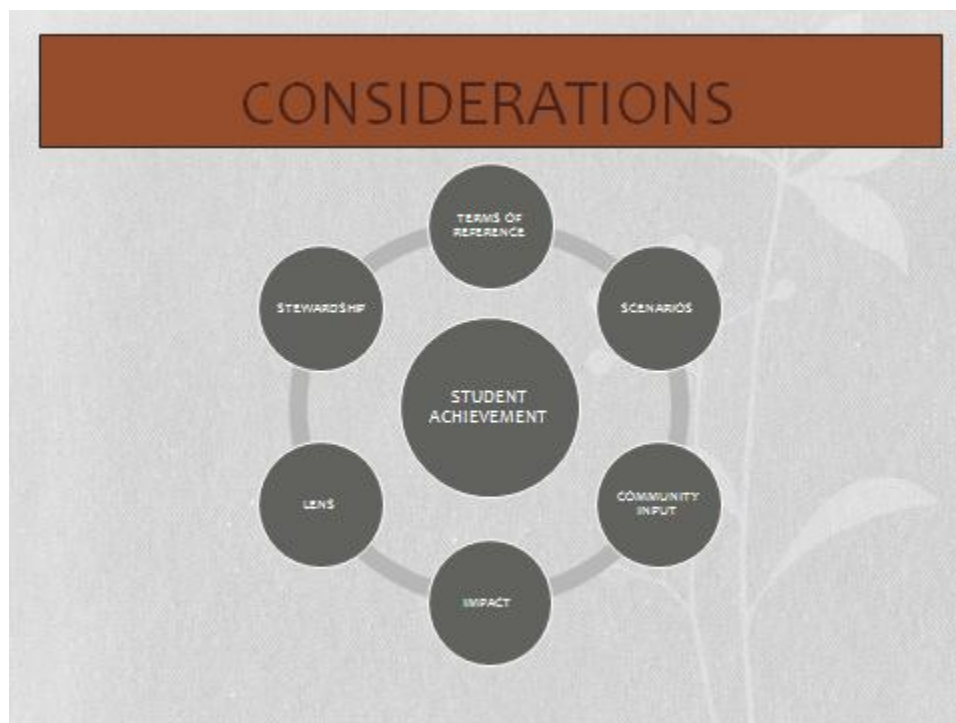


Fig #7

Terms of Reference - status quo is not an option as efficiencies must be found to support student learning.

Scenario - over 35 suggestions were reviewed by the committee and discussed at length.

Community Input - maintaining a secondary school in the west end of the city was a priority Administration worked extremely hard to find middle ground, which meets the community desires, but also assists the Board with its challenges.

Impact - closing a school is never easy and by no means are we minimizing the emotions surrounding this decision. In terms of impact, all students get to move together. As a board, we are committed to providing excellent programming at all of our schools. Furthermore, minimal capital investment is required to implement this recommendation.

Lens - from a global perspective in terms of the Board, what is a fair and reasonable decision?

Stewardship - when we examine efficiencies and the utilization of our assets, there will be cost savings in terms of operations, reduction of renewal costs and improved utilization rates.

Student Achievement - Administration continues to reinforce that it is not the building students are in but the people that are in the building that make the difference. Century will provide many opportunities not currently available to students at Forster.

Should Trustees accept this recommendation, Fig #8 depicts the expected enrolment in September of 2014.

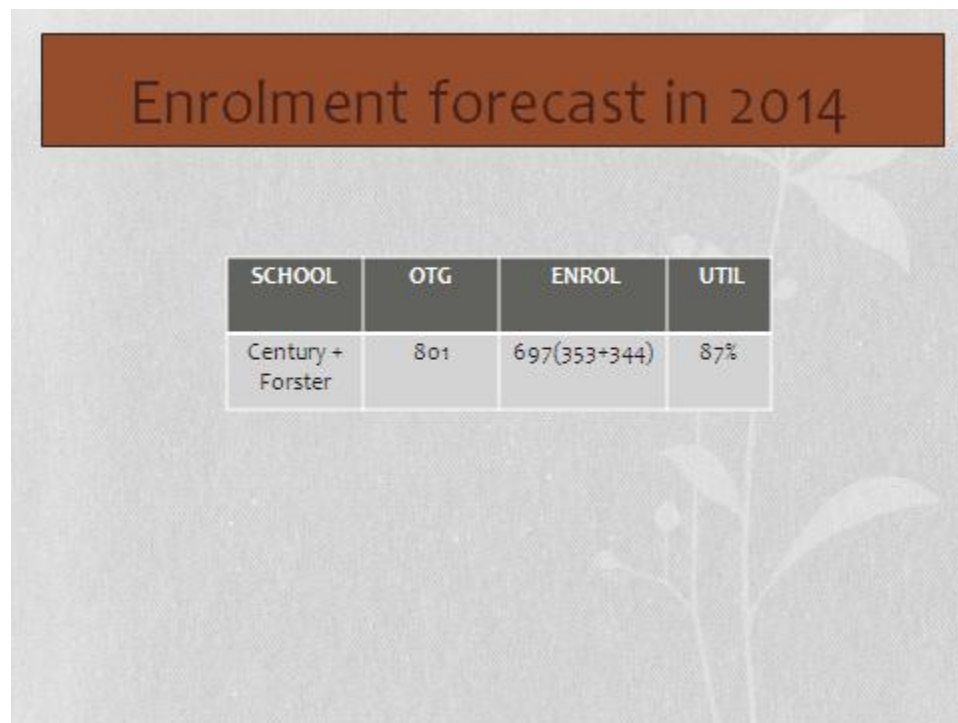


Fig #8

Potential Savings with the closure of Forster:

OPERATIONS	343,177
UTILITIES	170,809
MAINTENANCE	150,651
RENEWAL	10,604,806
<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>\$11,269,443</u>

Transportation Implications:

TRANSPORTATION

FORSTER
Currently has 4 special education busses
ESL students living beyond current boundaries receive a bus pass

CENTURY
Currently has 2 special education busses and 9 regular busses

ACCOMMODATION
Additional 2 or 3 busses would be required however the cost will be moderated by ESL students now riding school busses instead of using more expensive Transit Windsor bus passes

The closing of schools is a difficult and emotional decision. Senior Administration believes that as difficult as this decision may be, there will be more difficult decisions to make in the future. By being proactive now and addressing our infrastructure challenges, we will be able to allocate more of our funding to student programming. A brief list of benefits associated with the closure of Forster and the transitioning of students to Century follow:

- The Board receives 4.5 million dollars per year to address renewal needs for the entire system. Updated high and urgent renewal needs at Forster are over 19 million dollars. This is greater than the Ministry Funding allocation to build a new 700 pupil secondary school in Essex. This future liability will be eliminated.

- Enrolment projections show a continual steady decline over the next 15 years. Without the inclusion of ESL, Forster would be below 330 students and the cost of maintaining empty student spaces would continue to rise.
- Forster is not handicap accessible, thus forcing students with special needs to attend other schools. Century is fully accessible.
- Although Century does have renewal needs, the school did undergo a major mechanical upgrade within the last 10 years. The school is air conditioned.
- This recommendation provides operating savings, improves utilization rates, and reduces renewal needs within our Board.
- This recommendation addresses the community input to maintain a secondary school in the West end of the city.
- Forster students will have access to more student programming opportunities (hospitality, aesthetics and hair styling, etc.).
- Minimal capital investment may be required; scope to be finalized.
- All students transition together.

CONCLUSION:

Community input has been received at community meetings, via correspondence to trustees and the PARC e-mail box implemented by the Board. Alternatives presented have been strongly supported by each respective community, some with the underlying premise of protecting their own personal schools. We have seriously reviewed all of the community input that has been collected and have taken into consideration the concerns that we have heard. We firmly believe that the recommendations presented provide the least amount of disruption to the least amount of students and families.

Administration has not included a recommendation for a capital investment within the FFOS. In an area of declining enrolment which will have three relatively new schools, Dougall, Brock and the new school on the Taylor site, it was not deemed viable. Administration will continue to monitor enrolment at Marlborough and explore accommodation alternatives.

THE BOARD RECOMMENDS:

- 1. THAT THE FORSTER FAMILY OF SCHOOLS AND CENTURY SECONDARY SCHOOL ACCOMMODATION RECOMMENDATIONS BE PRESENTED FOR FINAL DETERMINATION AT A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD ON NOVEMBER 19, 2012.**

Appendices:

Please refer to the PARC link on the board website at www.publicboard.ca