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PURPOSE:

That the purpose of this submission is to ask that the PSSD #210 conduct a comprehensive review of public school offerings presently offered on South Hill and that these reviews be conducted in a safe and meaningful way given the COVID 19 challenges on public gatherings before proceeding with any new school construction on South Hill.

Further, any proposals for school closures and school consolidations should be examined and public consultation processes shall be developed in conjunction with any new capital school construction projects specifically, the proposed 1000 student joint use school proposed to be located on the far south western reaches of South hill.

This request is attainable by adhering to the PSSD's foundational statements that allow for:

- **Public participation that helps us make better decisions.**
- **Sharing information in that it improves the public understanding of decisions and policy.**
- **Establishment of process and provide opportunities for information sharing and engagement of the community and for community input.**

Although the PSSD has focused on the planning of a new elementary school on South Hill it has not provided any opportunity for a public review or public inputs on the issue of closure/consolidation of **all existing** public elementary neighbourhood schools on South Hill.

Why is this needed?

**1) LACK OF TRANSPARENCY AND GENUINE ENGAGEMENT:**

Despite communications from PSSD to ratepayers in 2018 that the government of Saskatchewan confirmed a new school would be built at Westmount or Sacred Heart, the proposed location of Westheath was never reviewed by the community prior to the board's decision in September 2019.

- Two public sessions were held on site options but the Westheath site off 1700 Block Glendale St. was not part of the formal review at either session. (The second night where it was briefly discussed was actually the same night of Grade 8 graduation ceremonies in June 2019 at Westmount.)
- The Board preferred location of a new 1000 student elementary school on a 10 acre site in the far southwesterly area of south hill was approved only after having the KPMG report for over a hour in closed session before forwarded immediately to an open session on the same afternoon in September 2019. **No public sessions were held with regard to the board's preferred choice before or after the decision.**
- That the location is controversial as the City of Moose Jaw was not previously consulted and owns the residentially zoned land in question. (It is not permitted for Cities to sell zoned reserve land to school boards in Saskatchewan.)

- That the proposed location has been poorly planned out. Not only did no consultation with the City of Moose Jaw not take place but a public review of the location choice was not conducted.

## **2) QUESTIONS ON SAFETY:**

- The proposed site is so far removed from the general population that it has been forecasted 75% of student attendees will be bussed to a location that was designed for residential use. Present daily conditions at Palliser Heights School, a school of 700 students, where traffic is a major safety issue for all should remind us that having many students at one location that is hard to access, presents many unsafe conditions.
- The proposed school site would create many trips not only for school buses but for parents and caregivers who will transport students. Bottlenecks at 9th S.W. and Coteau St. W. and the challenges transporting some students as many as 27 blocks east to west will contribute to stressed traffic routes that already exist on South Hill.
- COVID 19 protocols ask that students be privately transported as much as possible to cut down on student to student exposures on buses. Is the idea to transport by bus up to 750 students with bussing and private means practical and safe? Given the anticipated long recovery period to COVID 19 these transportation and logistical challenges could last years.
- Is this location the safest? Given that the proposed Westheath location is under a regularly used 15 Wing training flight path is this a safest location on South Hill for student learning housed in a large high positioned building due to the 10 acre site?

## **3) IS THIS THE WAY WE CREATE AND SUSTAIN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT WITH COMMUNITIES WE OPERATE IN?**

- The proposed Westheath School of 1000 students would force the closing of Empire Community School, Westmount Elementary School, St Mary and Sacred Heart Schools and create voids of centrally located educational offerings for South Hill.
- The proposed 1000 student elementary school on a 10 acre site in the far southwesterly area of South Hill location for a drastically removes students from well established activity rich schoolyards of Westmount and Empire that are attached to such amenities as ball fields, soccer fields, hockey rinks, tracks and field facilities(Gutheridge Field), community wading/swimming pools, playgrounds all just hundreds of metres from the Trans Canada Trail and beautiful Wakamow Valley and the endless learning opportunities for students to easily to walk to and from.
- What will our students have with immediate access to and safely use and share on a 10 acre site? Very little! This 10 acre site will need over 100 parking sites, bus lanes, safe picking up and dropping off zones for vehicles, visitor parking all putting pressure on surrounding residential streets to provide safe passage for students walking and being picked off site.
- The closure of Empire Community School would complete the removal of Prekindergarten to Grade 8 programs for central south hill and the

former school catchment area of King Edward School in South East South Hill. As well, by closing Westmount School, there would be a void in all of the geography of South Hill for public elementary offerings except for the location of the new 1000 student elementary school on a 10 acre site in the far southwesterly area of south hill school.

- As well the relocating of these elementary school would mean two existing early childhood centres on 4th Ave SW would be 20 blocks away. Locating these programs at the 1000 person school site would create additional demand for space and parking on a 10 acre site.
- This elimination of elementary public school offerings will affect students for easily accessible before and after school programs. Participation on extra-curricular teams and within school clubs and projects will be very limited to students who need to get on the bus at the end of the day because they need to get a ride to their residence up to 27 blocks away.

#### **4) LACK OF CHOICE FOR OTHER OPTIONS FOR SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION RENEWAL:**

The proposed Westheath Joint Use School elementary location decision process has been developed and controlled by the boards of the PSSD and HTCSD and the government of Saskatchewan.

The size of a 1000 person school is so large that the size may not be the best option for new school construction ideas for South Hill. The HTCSD first proposed a new school rebuild for Sacred Heart in 2012.

Why not allow for the development of options to be explored by all stakeholders that include the option of new construction at the present sites of Sacred Heart and Westmount to accommodate modernization of those facilities. The gymnasiums on those sites could be retained and allow for more options for physical activities. Monies saved by retaining gyms can add more features to be built at each location.

Riverview Collegiate Institute(RVCI) is apparently only being used at 27% capacity for the present level of student enrolment. A review of RVCI's potential for full use and could form options for the delivery of continued Prekindergarten to grade 8 and for Grade 9-12 for central South Hill. An important option for many and a good use of space meant for student learning. RVCI is an excellent facility and needs to be fully utilized.

#### **5) LOSING NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS:**

This would eliminate 4 prekindergarten programs at the locations of St Mary, Empire, Westmount and Sacred Heart. These programs serve their surrounding communities with easily accessible early child learning. Relocating to the far west corner of the city will affect families and program targeted children with more obstacles to access early childhood programs that do not require transportation.

#### **6) LOSS OF COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING VENUES FOR RESIDENTS:**

Would force closure and possible demolition of 4 School Gymnasiums, two of which were that were built by the taxpayers of Moose Jaw through tax increases and public referendums in the 1970s and 1980s by the Moose Jaw Public School Board onto ratepayers.

- What will be the effect on community use of facilities and regional or community programs administered from the school facility?
- What is the impact on educational and social opportunities for community members?
- How many millions of dollars in infrastructure taxes have Moose Jaw taxpayers paid to school boards for the past 130 years? Does the public not deserve a say in capital spending pertains to location and the possible closure and consolidation of public schools?

In closing, the spending of 50-70 million dollars should be well thought out, especially with taxpayers dollars and past investments by taxpayers that created neighbourhoods called St Mary. Empire, Westmount and Sacred Heart.

**The facts are clear:**

- No public opportunity to review proposed location of a new 1000 student school to date
- No school review process has been conducted for the closing and/or consolidation process of Empire Community School and Westmount Elementary
- Proposed site is needing paved streets, gutters and curbs and sewer and water lines, traffic mitigation measures- these costs will be borne by the Ministry of Education and may reduce \$ towards the building and its amenities
- Bussing would increase, private rides would increase, traffic woes would increase due to 750 students being bussed
- Only one option would remain for public elementary school programming on South Hill. This current project would close Westmount and Empire schools at those locations.
- In a time when we are to be encouraging and creating more physical activities due to the challenges of Diabetes Type 2, heart disease and obesity, we will bus or drive more kids, eliminate easily accessible opportunities for before and after school opportunities, for participation in extra curricular activities and clubs due to students who must get on a bus to go home many many blocks away.
- Instead of quick and convenient access at Westmount, Sacred Heart and Empire for students to football, baseball and soccer fields, city playgrounds, indoor rinks, tracks and pools we are relocating our best, brightest and enthusiastic youth to a postage stamp size 10 acre lot with no resources, a stamp located in the bottom right of a community envelope called South Hill.
- In the spirit of reconciliation, it appears that we are moving away from the “Valley of Peace” known as Wakamow and its learnings and history with regard to the people who were here before us and some

who are still here today. How many schools in Canada get relocated away from the Trans Canada Trail and a valley so rich and beautiful?

- Thank you for your time today, I wish you well in your decision making. I am not here today to make an argument. I am here to help tell a story of a diverse thriving community who with Empire Community School being the oldest continually operated school in the province deserves a fair and equitable process with regard to the future of public educational offerings on South hill.

I believe this is part of being fair and open to your stakeholders  
Thank you! Jan Radwanski