

Backgrounder

December 3, 1998

ACS1998-CM-LSB-0002

Impact of Potential School Closures

Fermeture possible des écoles - répercussion

Issue

- on November 24, 1998, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board received a report recommending the closing of ten schools for September 1999; at its meeting of November 25, the Community Services and Operations Committee directed staff to report on the impact of the recommended closures.
- particular attention was paid to two schools, McNabb Park Public School and Fisher Park Public School, since these are subject to legal agreements between the City and the School Board for joint occupancy and use.

What's New

- it is recommended the report----now completed----be forwarded to the School Board with the request that the Board consider the information in the report as part of its deliberations and that the Board delay making any final decisions on McNabb and Fisher Park until such time as the City and the Board are able to jointly review all issues and develop transition plans.

Impact

- the intent is to minimize the impact of closures on City and community programs and services.
- closing McNabb Public School would have a serious impact on the McNabb Community Centre, which shares space and facilities with the school: without access to these spaces, programs and community meetings and events involving 160,000 participants in over 300 programs would be severely restricted.
- closing Fisher Park /Summit Public School would effectively eliminate the Community Centre that serves the surrounding community, affecting about 40,000 participants in more than 100 programs.

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pager 780-3310

December 2, 1998

ACS1998-CM-LSB-0002
(File: XLU2900/0600)

Department of Community Services

Ward/Quartier
City Wide

- Community Services and Operations
Committee / Comité des services
communautaires et des opérations
- City Council / Conseil municipal

Action/Exécution

Impact of Potential School Closures

Fermeture possible des écoles - répercussion

Recommendations

That a copy of this submission be forwarded to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with a request that the Board:

1. Consider the information and issues contained in this document as part of their deliberations of School Board staff recommendations for the closure of 10 schools in September 1999.
2. Delay making any final decisions on the closure of McNabb and Fisher Park schools until a joint City/School Board review process has had an opportunity to address any operational and logistical issues associated with the closure of joint occupancy sites, and to develop any transition plans to minimize the impact of closures on City and community programmes and services.



December 2, 1998 (8:20a)

Janette K. Foo
Commissioner of Community Services



December 2, 1998 (10:08a)

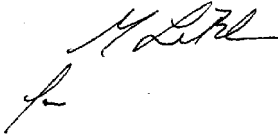
Approved by
John S. Burke
Chief Administrative Officer

DC:cg

Contact: Dan Chenier - 244-5300 ext. 1-3425

Financial Comment

There are no financial implications as a result of City Council's approval of this report. The impact to the City of Ottawa's Operating and Capital budgets will be presented in future submissions when specifics are known as to which schools the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board is recommending for closure.



December 1, 1998 (4:29p)

Mona Monkman
City Treasurer

ML:cds

Executive Report

Reasons Behind Recommendations

On November 24, 1998, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board received a staff report recommending the closure of 8 elementary schools and 2 high schools for September 1999. The following schools are being recommended for closure: Crichton Community School, Fisher Park Public School/Summit Public School, McNabb Park Public School, Overbrook Public School, Queensway Public School, Riverview Public School (Ottawa), Whitehaven Public School, McArthur High School, Confederation High School (Nepean), Riverview Public School (Cumberland).

At its November 25th meeting, the Community Services and Operations Committee directed staff to prepare a report detailing the impacts of the recommended closures. An inter-departmental working group, established to review school closures, has reviewed the School Board staff report, and have documented issues and concerns in Document 1 of this report. Particular attention was placed on the impact of closing McNabb and Fisher Park schools since both these sites are subject to legal agreements between the City and the School Board for joint occupancy and use.

Given the time constraints, it was not possible to complete an investigation of the property title for all the school sites, but such an exercise should be undertaken when the list of school closures is finalized.

No review was undertaken of the two schools located outside the City of Ottawa.

In reviewing the School Board report, it was noted that many of the City's issues and concerns identified in the Department of Community Services' report approved by the C.S.O.C. on October 7, 1998, and subsequently sent to the School Board, were not reflected in the School

Board's report. Accordingly, it recommended that these important points be reiterated as part of this report and conveyed to the Board prior to their final deliberations on school closures.

Consultation

Due to the short turn around time allowed for the preparation of this report, community consultation was not possible. However, any community issues or concerns that we are already aware of have been noted in appropriate sections of this report.

In addition, the information presented in Document 1 has been assembled through the cooperative effort of an inter-departmental working group which has representatives from Community Services (Leisure Services), Corporate Services (Property), Urban Planning and Public Works (Planning) and the Office of the City Solicitor.

Disposition

City Clerk - To forward a copy of this submission to the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board

List of Supporting Documentation

Document 1 - Impact of School Closures Recommended by Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Staff (Report 98-371 to Committee of the Whole released November 24/98)

Document 1

Impact of School Closures
Recommended by Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Staff
(Report 98-371 to Committee of the Whole released November 24/98)

On November 24, 1998, the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board released a staff report recommending the closure of 10 schools. The following identifies some of the significant issues for the City and community users associated with the closure of the 8 affected schools located in the City of Ottawa:

Programming and Community Use Issues:**1. McNabb Public School**

The closure of this school would have a serious operational impact on the McNabb Community Centre since both facilities are physically linked, share some joint use space, rely on each others resources for ongoing operations, and share the cost of many utility and lifecycle costs.

The school and Community Centre building were build under a legal agreement which called for the joint use of facilities. Many rooms, including the Gymnasium, Main Hall, Preschool Room and Community Room serve both the school (mostly during the daytime), and the Community Centre (evenings and weekends). Without access to these spaces, Community Centre programming and community meetings and events would be severely restricted. The Centre has an annual attendance of approximately 160,000 participants in the more than 300 programmes it offers to the community.

It is also anticipated that the departure of students from this site would significantly reduce the client base for many of the children's programmes such as After 4, Holiday camps, etc.. The present arrangement of having the facilities side-by-side provides a significant convenience for parents seeking after school and holiday programming for their children, and up to 35 children are registered for these services during each school term. With School Board reductions to Lighthouse programmes, these types of valuable services may not be available at the schools targeted for the relocation of McNabb students, or may be more difficult to access.

2. Fisher Park/Summit Public School:

The closure of this school would eliminate the Community Centre which serves the surrounding community. The City operates the Centre in Fisher Park School as part of a 1953 agreement, and has exclusive use of an office space and two meeting rooms, and makes use of the gymnasium and classrooms to deliver programmes after school hours and on weekends. The Centre has an annual attendance of approximately 40,000 participants in the more than 100 programmes it offers to the community in partnership with the local Community Association. The closest alternate Community Centre site would be the Hintonburg Community Centre which is located approximately 9 blocks east, and 3 blocks north of the Fisher Park site.

3. Crichton Community School:

The City does not programme at this site, but is aware that the facility is used for programmes and events organized by the Community and by groups renting space there. We are also aware that this same neighbourhood will be affected by the Catholic School Board's announcement that they will be closing Barette School. The school has been designated an early-closing school (7:00 p.m.) by the Board, thus reducing its usefulness as a site for evening community use.

Alternatives to accommodate community programming needs include the recently opened New Edinburgh Community Centre and church halls. The closest alternate Community Centres would be Le Patro and Routhier Community Centres in Lowertown, and the Lindenlea Community Centre. MacKay United Church has recently applied to the Community Foundation to upgrade their Memorial Hall (39 Dufferin) to make it safer, more accessible and functional for community activities. Their rationale in support of this project includes a reference to the fact that activity space in the community is at a premium, and that the need will become more critical when Crichton School closes.

The Crichton School site includes outdoor play equipment which was funded by the City of Ottawa. The front of the school features equipment appropriate for use by preschoolers and younger children, while the back of the school has equipment for older children. Since these facilities have served community recreational needs, as well as those of the children attending the school, their loss would reduce the availability of appropriately equipped play space in the neighbourhood. There are indications that the City retains ownership of some of the equipment, and should the school close, it may be feasible to relocate some of the pieces to nearby New Edinburgh Park.

4. Overbrook Public School:

This school is located across the street from the Overbrook Community Centre. The Centre has used space in the school, booked under the Reciprocal Use Agreement with the School Board to provide community programmes. The school was typically used for 3 hours per evening, twice a week, for an annual total of approximately 168 programming hours.

During the Fall 1998 programming season, the School Board advised the City that Overbrook School and nearby Queen Mary School, have been designated early as closing schools (7:00 p.m.), thus reducing their usefulness for evening programming. Fifty four schools were designated as early closing schools to assist the Board in meeting its budget challenges. Because of these limitations, no programmes were offered at Overbrook School this Fall, while some programmes were maintained at Queen Mary School by paying the School Board costs to maintain staffing beyond 7:00 p.m.. Programmes were also offered at McArthur High School which is also being recommended for closure.

5. Queensway Public School:

The City does not programme at this site, but is aware that the facility is used for programmes and events organized by the Community and by groups renting space there.

The school has been designated an early-closing school (7:00 p.m.) by the Board, thus reducing its usefulness as a site for evening community use. Until this year, the City provided the Queensway Lighthouse Community Association with a Sustaining Grant of \$12,700 to assist it with the provision of recreation programmes. With reduced School Board support and resources for the Lighthouse programme, the Community Association has not been able to maintain programmes, and the City grant has been cancelled.

The most likely alternative to accommodate community programming needs would be the Pinecrest Recreation Complex located south of the school, and to a lesser extent, the limited space available in the Parkway Park Fieldhouse.

The School site includes a Level 3 ball diamond which is permitted for use by the City through the Unified Booking System. This diamond is used primarily by adult leagues, and was booked for approximately 100 hours during the 1998 season. Loss of diamond would require relocation of users to other facilities.

6. Riverview Public School (Ottawa):

The City does not programme at this site, and is not aware of, or associated with, any community use.

The School and adjacent City Park site includes a Level 3 ball diamond which is permitted for use by the City through the Unified Booking System. The backstop and infield are on City land, while a good portion of the outfield is on School Board land. Loss of the School Board owned green space would remove a 150 foot wide area from the south end of the park. This City does not receive many permit applications for the use of this diamond.

The City is aware that the local community has expressed an interest in redeveloping this site to make better use of the park land. One suggestion has been to develop soccer pitches on this site. The community has also expressed a concern with the loss of green space in the community in the context of the proposed redevelopment of the nearby School Board lands adjacent to Balena Park.

7. Whitehaven Public School:

The City does not programme at this site, and is not aware of, or associated with any community use. The School Board report identifies that the facility is used by a dance club and girl guides and that classroom space is leased for a kindergarten programme.

The school has been designated an early-closing school (7:00 p.m.) by the Board, thus reducing its usefulness as a site for evening community use. There are no City operated Community Centres in the immediate vicinity.

A City funded outdoor rink operates on the park site adjacent to the school.

8. McArthur High School:

The City uses McArthur High School's gymnasium for a variety of sports programmes. The Women and Sports programme and Overbrook Community Centre use the facility for a total of 9 hours per week during a 31 week programming season (279 programming hours).

There is a high demand for access to High School calibre gymnasiums across the City from City and Community programmes, and the loss of any such facilities is of concern to the Leisure Services Branch. The recent loss of the two gymnasium at the Ottawa Technical High School has aggravated this situation and had a negative impact on our ability to provide gymnasium based programmes.

Plant Issues:

1. McNabb Public School:

The School and the Centre share most of the site's mechanical systems such as heating, water, electricity and fire alarm. In addition, the current agreement calls for cooperation and cost sharing with respect to ongoing cleaning and maintenance, and on the periodic lifecycle upgrades to the facility. Loss of this interdependency would have a serious operational impact on the City, as would the cost of absorbing 100% of utility and maintenance costs. There would also be significant capital expenditures required to retrofit the mechanical systems of the Centre and school to make both facilities self-sufficient and secure.

Contractual Issues:

1. McNabb Public School:

There are two agreements between the City and the School Board affecting the McNabb School site. In 1966, an agreement was finalized between the parties to construct a joint school-community centre on a site generally bounded by Percy Street, James Street, Bronson Avenue and Gladstone Avenue. Seventy-five percent (75%) of the costs were assumed by the School Board and twenty-five percent (25%) were the responsibility of the City. The City sold a portion of the site to the School Board and these lands presently contain the school and approximately one-half of the community centre. The majority of the school play area is on City lands. The parking area for all facilities is on both the lands of the City and the Board. Certain parts of the site owned by the City are restricted to recreational purposes.

In February, 1968, a further agreement was executed between the parties to address the operation, maintenance and repair of the grounds and the school-community centre. It also dealt with the joint use of the building and the division of costs and responsibility. The joint use facilities include the gymnasium, assembly hall, community room, shop, sports field, kitchen, check room and playground.

During the school terms, the school has exclusive use Monday to Friday until 6:30 in the evening. At other times such as evenings and holidays the City has exclusive use. The City maintains the grounds and is responsible for cleaning while the Board is responsible for operating the heating, air conditioning, water and sewage systems. Cost of fuel, water and power used in the school and joint use facilities apportioned on a 75% school to 25% City basis. Repairs and replacements of equipment in the centre if not attributable to one party are apportioned on a 65% school-35% City basis. The Board maintains insurance and the City reimburses the Board for 25% of the premiums.

This agreement is in effect for forty-nine years or until February of 2017. It does not contain provisions for termination or address any issues related to closure of the school.

2. Fisher Park/Summit Public School

This site currently contains the school which houses the community centre, a park and parking. The City of Ottawa owns the land and in 1953 entered into a lease with the School Board for a period of ninety-nine (99) years from 1945 for an annual rent of one dollar. In this lease, the Board agreed to “conduct, supervise and maintain at its own expense community wide, recreational activities”. It also provided that certain lots adjacent to Byron Avenue could be sublet to the Elmdale Tennis Club. The lease contained general covenants to pay the rent and keep the lands in good repair.

Prior to 1990, the School administered the community programming. In 1995, a further agreement was entered into between the parties to substitute for the covenant regarding recreational activities contained in the original lease. The Board pays a base cost of \$92,500.00 established in 1993 plus any annual increase (\$95,200 in 1997) for the operation of the core portion of the Recreation Programme. This amount is paid in two installments in January and June of each year.

With respect to maintenance, the City is to maintain the park site but is to be reimbursed by the Board while the Board maintains the school including the areas utilized by the recreation programme. The costs of utilities are paid by the Board to the City.

During the school term, the Board has the use of the park site until 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday while the City has the use of the park site on weekends, holidays and during the summer. Certain rooms within the school are allocated for the sole use of the recreation programme including for meetings, storage, office space, washrooms and five parking spaces are allocated to staff and users of the programme. Other rooms in the school may also be used by the programme during the day if approved by the Board.

There are no provisions regarding termination of the agreement. However, if the building is destroyed or damaged and is unfit to be occupied, the original lease continues in effect.

The School Board report identifies that the Board owns 1.2 acres of the site’s 9.6 acres. City documents indicate that the City owns the entire site.

Planning Issues:

The Ottawa Carleton District School Board staff report provides little information with respect to the Board's intentions for the disposal of the candidate surplus school sites. Recommendation "C" of the report states "that staff be directed to bring back to the Board, a strategy for disposition of facilities approved for closure". Consequently, there are no specific proposals to assess on any of the eight sites identified and it is premature to attempt to do so in the absence of such details. However, it is considered helpful to provide some factual information associated with the subject properties which may be of assistance once further information becomes available as to the Board's intentions. This information is summarized in the following Table:

SCHOOL	OFFICIAL PLAN	ZONING	NEIGHBOURHOOD OR SECONDARY PLAN	SITE AREA/ % OPEN SPACE	TRAFFIC PLAN	OTHER
Crichton St. School 200 Crichton St.	Residential Area	Minor Institutional I1	New Edinburgh Neighbourhood Plan (Key Principles are contained within Volume 2 of the Official Plan)		Traffic Calming Study u/w	Designated Heritage Building under Part IV of the Heritage Act
Fisher Park Public School/ Summit P.S. 250 Holland Ave.	Residential Area	Minor Institutional I1	Ottawa West Neighbourhood Plan (Key Principles are contained within Volume 2 of the Official Plan)		n.a.	Nearby Residential Development Potential identified in Scott-Wellington Study. Significant residential infill potential exists within the Tunney's Pasture complex.
McNabb Park P.S. 160 Percy St.	Residential Area (Public Use in Secondary Policy Plan)	Minor Institutional I1	Centretown Secondary Policy Plan & Centretown Neighbourhood Plan		Centretown Traffic Calming Study	n.a.
Overbrook P.S. 149 King George St.	Residential Area	Minor Institutional I1	Overbrook Neighbourhood Plan		n.a.	n.a.
Queensway P.S. 2221 Elmira Dr.	Residential Area	Minor Institutional I1	Pinecrest-Queensway Development Plan		n.a.	n.a.
Riverview P.S. 260 Knox Cr.	Residential Area	Minor Institutional I1	Alta Vista Visioning Study		n.a.	Residential Development Proposals nearby at Industrial - Rolland and at Belena Park

SCHOOL	OFFICIAL PLAN	ZONING	NEIGHBOURHOOD OR SECONDARY PLAN	SITE AREA/ % OPEN SPACE	TRAFFIC PLAN	OTHER
Whitehaven P.S. 920 Parkhaven Ave.	Residential Area	Minor Institutional I1	n.a.		n.a.	n.a.
McArthur High School 485 Donald St.	Residential Area	Minor Institutional I1	Overbrook Neighbourhood Plan		n.a.	n.a.

¹Most Restrictive Zoning is Comprehensive Zoning By-law 1998

1. Official Plan

Elementary and Secondary schools are defined in the Plan as “minor institutional” uses and are considered to perform a primarily neighbourhood serving role within local residential neighbourhoods. Hence, all candidate sites are located in areas of the city designated as Residential Area in the City’s Official Plan. Should the sites become the subject of requests for redevelopment for residential purposes, an amendment to the Official Plan would not be necessary. An exception to this rule occurs with respect to the McNabb Park School site, which is situated in an area of the city covered by a Secondary Policy Plan, containing policy direction at a more detailed level specific to the geographic area of Centretown. The “Public Use” designation applying to McNabb in the Secondary Plan would require a formal amendment to enable residential uses to develop at this location.

The Official Plan contains a number of development guidelines and performance standards by which City Council will assess proposals for development/redevelopment. It also contains policy direction specific to minor institutional sites, including their reuse. These are aimed primarily at ensuring compatibility with established uses in the area and the conservation of existing urban forest and physical features.

2. Zoning By-law

At the present time, there are two comprehensive zoning by-laws in force and effect in the City of Ottawa, By-law Number Z-2K and the Zoning By-law, 1998, the City’s new comprehensive by-law. This situation will remain until the final disposition of all appeals submitted against the 1998 by-law has occurred. In the interim, the most restrictive provisions of both by-laws apply for interpretation and decision-making purposes. In the case of the eight candidate sites, the 1998 provisions are interpreted to be the most restrictive. The applicable zoning category is “I1”, the Minor Institutional Zone. The purpose of the zone is to permit a range of neighbourhood-serving, emergency and institutional uses, such as schools, places of worship, libraries, parks, and community centres, to be located in areas designated Residential Area in the Official Plan. In addition, the impact of the uses permitted by this zone is to be minimized and the uses are to be located in a manner compatible with adjacent land use through certain specified means set out in the zone provisions.

Should the Board or subsequent owner wish to redevelop the subject sites for uses other than those permitted in the I1 zone, a rezoning will be necessary.

3. Neighbourhood Plans

All but one of the candidate sites are located within areas of the city which were the subject of a neighbourhood planning process at one time or another. These plans were approved by City Council and in some instances, a summary of the key principles of the plans were subsequently incorporated into Volume 2 of the Official Plan. The neighbourhood plans vary significantly in level of detail, content and format and hence, the degree to which each addresses the matter of schools and institutional uses is not consistent. Consideration of the neighbourhood plans will occur as part of any assessment of impact of potential redevelopment. Formal amendment of the provisions of the neighbourhood plans by City Council does not normally occur, however, unless changes to the Key Principles section of the Official Plan are implied.

4. Open Space

Typically there are substantial areas of school sites which are devoted to playground and/or playing fields or other open space activities. Often these parts of a site are at least partially “green”. The relative percentages have been approximated in the above Table. It was not always possible, given the available time and complexity of some of the sites, to make a fully reliable estimate of the size. Often city parkland is located immediately adjacent to the school site and title searches are necessary to confirm ownership and/or lease arrangements.

5. Traffic Plans

Only a few of the candidate sites are located in areas which have had some form of traffic planning exercise carried out. However, the findings and recommendations of these studies may be of relevance in consideration of the future use/reuse of the sites in question. From an operational perspective, schools generally require the imposition of certain on-street parking regulations and signage, such as, “No Stopping”, “No Parking”, maximum parking duration, “Pedestrian Advance”, “Playground Advance”, and School Bus Loading Zone”. Reuse of school sites for other purposes will mean removal of signage and changes to traffic control measures. Specifically related to Whitehaven Public School, it is noted that a potential sidewalk project may need to be reassessed or abandoned if the closure of this school is approved.

6. Other Considerations

It is noted that the Crichton Street school is a designated heritage building under the provisions of the Ontario Heritage Act. Alterations to the exterior of the building or demolition require the approval of City Council.

Substantial residential redevelopment potential exists within the catchment area of at least two of the candidate sites, Fisher Park and Riverview.

