

## CALGARY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Minutes of the Public Meeting re: Discussion Respecting Consideration of Closure of the Kindergarten to Grade 6 Regular Program at Chris Akkerman School, held in the Chris Akkerman School Gymnasium, 5004 Marbank Drive NE, Calgary, Alberta on Monday, February 22, 2010 at 7:00 p.m.

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### PRESENT

#### Board of Trustees:

Ms. C. Bazinet, Trustee – Wards 12 & 14  
Mr. G. Dirks, Trustee – Wards 1 & 2  
Ms. P. King, Trustee – Wards 5 & 10  
Ms. K. Kryczka, Trustee – Wards 11 & 13  
Dr. G. Lane, Trustee – Wards 6 & 7

#### Administration:

Mr. P. Carlton, Moderator and Chair of the Public Meeting  
Ms. K. Barry, Co-Chair of the Public Meeting  
Ms. J. Barkway, Procedures Chair  
Mr. D. Stevenson, Deputy Chief Superintendent of Schools  
Ms. D. Selby, Director, Area III  
Ms. D. Perrier, Recording Secretary

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Copies of the Agenda entitled “Board of Trustees, Calgary Board of Education, Public Meeting, Discussion Respecting Consideration of Closure of the Kindergarten to Grade 6 Regular Program at Chris Akkerman School”, Monday, February 22, 2010, which also contained information with respect to Purpose of the Meeting, Discussion Guidelines, Written Submissions and Further Questions, were made available to those present and submitted for the record.

Mr. Carlton called the meeting to order at 7:00p.m. He stated that he would be Chair of the meeting and that the format of the meeting is determined by the Closure of Schools Regulation, thus it has a high level of structure regarding the information that must be presented. He introduced the Trustees present and the Calgary Board of Education Administration. He noted also the attendance of Ms. D. Warmington, Principal, Chris Akkerman School, and Mr. N. Yaremko, Principal, Marlborough School, and gave recognition to the teachers and staff members that were in attendance.

Mr. Carlton stated that the meeting was being recorded for the purpose of maintaining an accurate internal record of the proceedings and he noted that minutes would be available on the website at [www.cbe.ab.ca](http://www.cbe.ab.ca) prior to the Board of Trustees making its decision. Copies of the *Written Notice Regarding Consideration of Closure of the Regular Program (Kindergarten to Grade 6) at Chris Akkerman School* were available on the table at the back of the gymnasium.

### OPENING REMARKS

Deputy Chief Superintendent D. Stevenson welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked those who have committed significant time in relation to this matter. He spoke of the advisory role and the support role of Administration in these proceedings. He noted that the department of Community Engagement and Operational Planning (CEOP) had initiated and coordinated an engagement process with the community where meetings were held to address the opportunities and challenges associated with the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School. Calgary Board of Education was provided with feedback from the focus groups and open houses.

On January 19, 2010 after deliberation, Trustees voted to consider closure of the Kindergarten to Grade 6 Regular Program at Chris Akkerman School. He noted that no determination has yet been made and that there have been situations in the past, in matters such as this, where the Board has decided not to follow the administrative recommendation. He stated that the role of Administration is to provide the Board of Trustees, the school community and the general public with full and total support in providing relevant information and answers to questions. He assured that throughout this process the Administration will be doing just that.

On behalf of Calgary Board of Education, Deputy Chief Superintendent Stevenson welcomed any questions or comments that the public may wish to direct to him or to the team that was assembled at the meeting.

### **PURPOSE OF THE MEETING AND ROLE OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Mr. Carlton drew attention to the back of the *Agenda* and reviewed the purpose of the meeting. He welcomed Ms. C. Bazinet, Second Vice-Chair and Trustee of Wards 12 & 14, to share the Board of Trustees' role in the closure consideration process.

Ms. Bazinet presented the following information on behalf of the Board of Trustees:

"On Tuesday, January 19, 2010, after discussion and debate at a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees, a motion was passed by the Board to give consideration to the closure of the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School.

The Board of Trustees has the sole responsibility and authority to make closure decisions and I want to make it clear tonight that no decision has been made at this time.

Based on information provided to us by Administration, a Written Notice Regarding this Consideration of Closure has been issued by the Board of Trustees, but that is only one part of the information that has been, and will be, reviewed and considered by Trustees. In accordance with Alberta legislation and the Board of Trustees' Governance Policies and Procedures, before making any final decision on a matter such as this, the Board follows a process to secure additional community input.

That process involves providing important and relevant information to you – the *Written Notice* – and reviewing it with you. It also involves providing you and other concerned members of the public an opportunity to impact our decision by providing us with your input. Tonight, Trustees want to augment our understanding of the information presented in the *Written Notice* by hearing your observations, submissions and questions. That is why the Board of Trustees has organized and convened tonight's public meeting. Following tonight's meeting, you will have an additional opportunity to ask further written questions and make further written submissions.

Trustees, as the final decision makers, are here tonight to listen and observe. Throughout tonight's discussion and throughout the closure consideration process, Trustees will be paying very careful attention to what you have to say.

All of the information collected during the closure consideration process will be weighed very carefully by Trustees before any final decision is made.

The Board of Trustees tentatively anticipates debating the merits of this matter and making a decision regarding this closure consideration on Tuesday, March 23, 2010.

The Board's ongoing commitment is to provide educational programs and services in suitable facilities throughout Calgary. To honour that commitment, we as a Board, need to take into consideration student populations, the demand for programs, our available resources and any other factors that may be significant. Although we certainly may consider financial factors, such as costs

of the school or program, there are many other equally important considerations that impact our examination of any school's circumstances - student enrolment levels, our ability to resource instructional programming, the health and safety of students, accessibility, and on a system-wide basis, serving the overall interests of public education within our school jurisdiction.

Consideration of closure is a very serious matter to the Board of Trustees and we clearly appreciate that it is very significant to the students, parents and other concerned members of the community. Because of that, we want to hear your input around this very important matter. We look forward to listening carefully tonight to your comments, observations and questions.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees I thank you."

Mr. Carlton indicated that the public's observations and questions form part of the material that the Board of Trustees will consider as they review the potential closure of the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School and ultimately make a decision. It was pointed out that the public also has until 12:00 noon on Monday, March 22, 2010 to submit written follow-up questions and until 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 23, 2010 to provide further written submissions regarding this closure consideration.

### **REVIEW OF THE WRITTEN NOTICE**

Mr. Carlton gave a PowerPoint presentation that provided an overview of the *Written Notice*. The following is a summary of the presentation given by Mr. Carlton.

#### Issue

Chris Akkerman School and Marlborough School both offer a kindergarten to grade 6 regular program for students residing in the residential district of Marlborough. Currently, there are not sufficient students to support two regular programs in the residential district of Marlborough as the student enrolment is stable, but slightly declining.

Chris Akkerman School currently accommodates students in the regular program and Traditional Learning Centre program for Area III. The regular program enrolment at Chris Akkerman School is stable, where the demand for the Traditional Learning Centre program continues to increase.

With the new school opening in Saddle Ridge for the 2010- 2011 school year, Marlborough School will have excess capacity.

#### Student Accommodation Proposal

The student accommodation proposal recommends closure of the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School and the designation of students residing in the residential district of Marlborough to Marlborough School.

#### Rationale

There is a need to provide sustainable kindergarten to grade 6 regular programming for the students from the residential district of Marlborough.

Marlborough School is no longer required to accommodate the kindergarten to grade 3 students from the residential district of Saddle Ridge, as the new Saddle Ridge School will open for the 2010-2011 school year. This will result in Marlborough School having excess capacity.

It is anticipated that only one of the two schools (Chris Akkerman School or Marlborough School) in the Marlborough residential district will be required in the future to accommodate kindergarten to grade 6 regular program students.

Interest in the Traditional Learning Centre program in Area III continues to grow.

### Section A: Implications for Affected Attendance Areas

#### Current Attendance Areas

The map on page 5 of the *Written Notice*, which illustrates the current attendance areas for Chris Akkerman School and Marlborough School, was depicted on the overhead and reviewed by Mr. Carlton.

#### Schools and Programs

Chris Akkerman School offers a regular program for students from kindergarten to grade 6 from the residential district of Marlborough, north of Marlborough Drive N.E. It also offers the Traditional Learning Centre program for students from kindergarten to grade three, residing in Area III.

Due to high enrolment in the Traditional Learning Centre program in the 2009-2010 school year, the kindergarten students have been temporarily located at another school, but remain designated to Chris Akkerman School. It is anticipated that the Traditional Learning Centre program kindergarten students will be accommodated at Chris Akkerman School in the 2010-2011 school year.

The chart provided on page 3 of the *Written Notice* identifies September 30, 2009 enrolment at Chris Akkerman School. Chris Akkerman School accommodates a total of 461 students, of which 161 reside in the residential district of Marlborough.

176 kindergarten students in the Traditional Learning Centre program have been accommodated temporarily at another location for the 2009-2010 school year. It was noted that kindergarten enrolment must be counted at 0.5 FTE (full time equivalent) and instructional space available assumes 25 students per classroom.

Marlborough School has instructional space to accommodate 500 students and as of September 30, 2009, had an enrolment of 460 students in the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program. Of those, 109 students reside in the residential district of Marlborough and 343 students reside in the residential district of Saddle Ridge. Kindergarten to grade 3 students from the residential district of Saddle Ridge will be designated to the new school scheduled to open for the 2010- 2011 school year.

On page 4 of the *Written Notice* the chart indicates the instructional space available and September 30, 2009 enrolment at Marlborough School. Please note that kindergarten enrolment is counted at 0.5 FTE (full time equivalent) and instructional space available assumes 25 students per classroom.

#### Proposed Attendance Areas

The map on page 6 of the *Written Notice* illustrates the proposed attendance area which would take effect if the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School were to close.

#### Change of Designation

Page 7 of the *Written Notice* shows the student designations that will change effective the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year if the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School were to close.

- Kindergarten to grade six students residing in the residential district of Marlborough (north and south of Marlborough Drive N.E.) will be designated to Marlborough School.
- Consistent with Calgary Board of Education practice, students residing in the residential district of Marlborough will have priority to attend the Traditional Learning Centre program at Chris Akkerman School, if their parents are interested in the program's philosophy and students are suitable for placement.

Projected Enrolment for Chris Akkerman School

On page 7 of the *Written Notice* the chart indicates the projected 2010 enrolment for Chris Akkerman School, if the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School were to close.

The student enrolment in the Traditional Learning Centre program at Chris Akkerman School is projected to be 492 kindergarten to grade 3 students.

The Traditional Learning Centre program is the fastest growing alternative program within the Calgary Board of Education and Chris Akkerman School will be at capacity with the anticipated program growth. Therefore, kindergarten intake will be limited to 100 registrants, in anticipation of an upcoming decision regarding the grade configuration at Sir Wilfrid Laurier School. We will continue to work to accommodate the high level of interest in this program.

Projected Enrolment for Marlborough School

Given that the kindergarten to grade 3 regular program students from the residential district of Saddle Ridge are designated to the new school for the 2010-2011 school year, the enrolment at Marlborough School will decline significantly.

The chart on page 8 shows the projected 2010 enrolment for Marlborough School if the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School were to close. The projection includes grade 4 students from the residential district of Saddle Ridge and all grades 3 to 5 regular program students currently accommodated at Mayland Heights School from the residential district of Saddle Ridge.

With the designation of all students in the Marlborough residential district, and the designation of the grade 4, 5 and 6 regular program students from the residential district of Saddle Ridge to Marlborough School, Marlborough School is projected to have a student enrolment of 454 students.

Section B: Implications Relative to Calgary Board of Education's Long Range Capital Plan

Capital Plan

A decision to close the regular program at Chris Akkerman School would have no implications relative to the CBE's long range capital plan which is comprised of the School Capital Plan 2010-2013 and the Ten-Year Facilities Plan 2009-2018.

The CBE's School Capital Plan 2010-2013 identifies strategies to provide new and modernized schools in closer proximity to student populations.

The Calgary Board of Education's Ten-Year Facilities Plan 2009-2018 provides detailed site, building, program and planning information for each school building.

Both documents are available from any Calgary Board of Education school or can be accessed on the Calgary Board of Education website at: <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/aboutus/documents.asp>

Section C: Implications with Respect to Busing

Administration anticipates an impact on busing as a result of the implementation of the accommodation proposal. Approximately 82 students in the regular program at Chris Akkerman School will be eligible for subsidized transportation from the residential district of Marlborough to Marlborough School. Grades 4, 5 and 6 students residing in the residential district of Saddle Ridge will continue to be eligible for subsidized transportation to Marlborough School.

Pages 14 to 16 of the *Written Notice* (Appendix 1) summarize the eligibility criteria, fees and parent/guardian responsibility relating to student transportation. Administrative Regulation 6095-Student

Transportation, which provides information regarding the administration of transportation services is available on the CBE website at: <http://www.cbe.ab.ca/policies/policies/AR6095.pdf>

Appendix 2 on page 17 of the *Written Notice* provides the proposed Walk Zone Map for Marlborough School.

#### Section D: Educational, Programming and Staffing Impacts

##### *Educational Impact on Chris Akkerman School if the Regular Program is Not Closed*

If the recommendation for closure of the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School were not approved, the projection indicates that the student enrolment would be significantly over capacity because the school would be fully utilized by the regular program and by the Area III Traditional Learning Centre program. Programming effectively for student learning and meeting student needs becomes very challenging when the enrolment in a school is considerably over capacity.

The status quo enrolment projection for Chris Akkerman School, on page 9 of the *Written Notice*, indicates that there are 157 kindergarten to grade 6 regular program students from the Marlborough residential district and 492 kindergarten to grade 3 Traditional Learning Centre program students, equalling an enrolment of 649 students in a facility that can accommodate 575 students. Even with kindergarten counted at 0.5 FTE, student enrolment would be over the school's capacity.

##### *Educational Impact on Marlborough School if the Regular Program at Chris Akkerman School is Not Closed*

Projections for the 2010-2011 school year indicate that the non-closure of the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School would result in an enrolment of 303 kindergarten to grade 6 students at Marlborough School.

The chart on page 10 of the *Written Notice* demonstrates the imbalanced number of students per grade in the kindergarten to grade 6 program. With the kindergarten to grade 3 enrolment projected to be less than 20 students per grade there would be constraints in organizing students into classroom groupings for instruction.

##### *Educational Impact if the Regular Program at Chris Akkerman School is Closed*

The closure of the regular program at Chris Akkerman School and the designation of the students to Marlborough School would result in a larger regular program population at Marlborough School.

The principal would have greater flexibility in determining how to effectively allocate physical and human resources to best serve the learning needs of students. As funding is provided on a per student basis and schools are resourced according to the number of students, students would continue to have access to teachers with expertise in a wide variety of disciplines and access to staff who could offer a wider range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities.

This proposal provides two schools that will be fully utilized and the Marlborough residential district will have a sustainable regular program and Traditional Learning Centre program to offer students.

##### *Staffing Impact*

Staffing resources are allocated to schools on a per school base allocation, student enrolment and student profile. Resource allocation levels would be adjusted at Marlborough School to reflect the projected student enrolment and profile for 2010-2011; the majority of the allocation would follow the students. Further adjustments would be made should there be any discrepancy between the projected student enrolment/profile and the actual September 30, 2010 student enrolment.

Deployment of both resources and staff is at the discretion of the principal. Based on the number and individual needs of students enrolled at a school, the principal determines how to effectively allocate physical and human resources to best serve the learning needs of students.

One benefit of a larger student population is the ability to take advantage of efficiencies inherent in a larger staff.

Final staffing decisions cannot be made until the actual number of students and their unique learning needs are determined.

Teachers would be transferred in accordance with the CBE's current staffing processes. Final teacher staffing decisions take place in the fall of each school year, based on the September 30th actual enrolments. Support staff would be identified for transfer/layoff and considered for placement in accordance with the CBE's Staff Association Collective Agreement and current staffing processes. Facility Operations staffing levels would be assessed in accordance with the CUPE Local 40 Collective Agreement and caretaking staffing formulae.

#### Section E: Financial and Capital Implications

##### *Financial and Operational Costs*

The financial and operational cost impact is negligible as Chris Akkerman School will continue to be operational. The financial and operational costs are not key factors in the consideration of closure of the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School; both physical and human resources are allocated according to student enrolment/profile and would follow the students to their designated schools.

##### *Capital Impacts*

There is no known capital cost associated with the proposed program closure since no renovations or modernizations are required to accommodate the increased number of students at either Chris Akkerman School or Marlborough School.

#### Section F: Future Facility Plans

Chris Akkerman School will continue to offer a Traditional Learning Centre program for students in Area III.

### RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

Ms. K. Barry, System Principal, chaired the remainder of the meeting.

#### Previously Submitted or Anticipated Questions

***Question:*** *If the regular program at Chris Akkerman School is closed, can the busing be arranged for students who attend the Marlborough Day Nursery (i.e. a bus stop children can access)?*

**Response:** We are appreciative of the concern parents have raised regarding daycare issues. The proposed walk zone has been reviewed by the Transportation Advisory Committee and no adjustments are being recommended. The determination of eligibility for transportation is based on the student's home residence. The placement of stops is determined by the number of contracts received and we place stops within 800 metres from their home address for these students. Until contracts are submitted we cannot determine where stop locations will be.

***Question:*** *There are more home-area kindergarten to grade 6 regular program students at Chris Akkerman School than at Marlborough School. Why not move the Marlborough School students to Chris Akkerman and the Traditional Learning Centre program to Marlborough School?*

**Response:** If the regular program at Marlborough School were to close, over 500 students would be impacted. Students who would have to change schools would include: regular program students from Marlborough at Marlborough School; regular program students from Saddle Ridge at Marlborough School; and students in the Traditional Learning Centre program at Chris Akkerman School. Projected regular program enrolment at Marlborough School is approximately 300 students for the 2010-2011 school year. Projected regular program enrolment at Chris Akkerman School is approximately 155 students. Closure of the regular program at Marlborough School would have greater implications for staff related to transfer, placement and contractual obligations.

Accommodation of the regular program at Marlborough School and the Traditional Learning Centre program at Chris Akkerman School allows for better utilization of space. Projected regular program enrolment, including Saddle Ridge grades 4 to 6, when the Marlborough community is combined is approximately 455 students. Marlborough School's capacity is 500 student spaces, which equals approximately 90% utilization. With the continued growth in the Traditional Learning Centre program, enrolment is anticipated to meet the 575 student space capacity of Chris Akkerman School. If the regular program was accommodated at Chris Akkerman School, the school would be approximately 80% utilized and growth of the Traditional Learning Centre program would be more limited at Marlborough School.

**Question:** *Why are community students being asked to move rather than students in the Traditional Learning Centre program?*

**Response:** The Calgary Board of Education has an obligation to effectively utilize space and resources and at the same time balance competing values and interests of all of our stakeholders. There are 1075 student spaces between the two elementary schools in the Marlborough community. Combined projected regular program enrolment from the community at Marlborough School and Chris Akkerman School is 248 students. This proposal provides the Marlborough community with a single, stable regular program that will not be dependent on bused communities to remain sustainable.

**Question:** *What other options has the Calgary Board of Education considered for the Traditional Learning Centre program? Why not designate the Traditional Learning Centre program kindergarten students currently accommodated at Penbrooke Meadows to Marlborough School and keep both regular programs? What is the long term plan for the Traditional Learning Centre program in Area III?*

**Response:** The decision to bring the kindergarten students in the Traditional Learning Centre program back to Chris Akkerman School has been made in part, to help keep families together. Regardless of the growth in the Traditional Learning Centre program at Chris Akkerman School, the opening of the new school in Saddle Ridge significantly impacts regular program enrolment in the Marlborough community. Community Engagement and Operational Planning and Area III will continue to work with parents and other stakeholders to address the specific long term needs of the Traditional Learning Centre program.

**Question:** *Who in the community (or school) surrounding Chris Akkerman will take ownership for its maintenance if all of the students are bused in from other communities?*

**Response:** One of the foundations of the Traditional Learning Centre program is the virtues program that addresses our collective need to be responsible citizens and guardians of our environment. The Calgary Board of Education is responsible for all maintenance and upkeep of school properties.

**Question:** *The Written Notice states that 82 students would be eligible for busing to Marlborough School if the regular program at Chris Akkerman is closed. If the regular program at Marlborough School was closed and students designated to Chris Akkerman School, how many students would require busing from within the Marlborough community?*

**Response:** If the regular program at Marlborough School was closed and students were designated to Chris Akkerman School, 51 students residing in Marlborough would be eligible for subsidized transportation.

**Question:** *How are walk distances measured? Is 1.4 kilometres within walking distance for 6 and 7 year olds?*

**Response:** Provincial funding for school transportation is based on all students walking 2.4 kilometres from their place of residence to their designated school. The Calgary Board of Education has moved away from an exact walk limit measurement of 1.2 kilometres for elementary schools, and has developed a "walk zone" for each school. Walk zones have been established based on criteria such as: community boundaries, natural hazards or barriers, roadways or infrastructure as well as an approximate distance anywhere from 1.4 to 1.7 kilometres from the school, which is well within the mandated 2.4 kilometre distance.

**Question:** *If this closure is approved by the Trustees, what is the transition plan?*

**Response:** Immediately following a Trustee decision, Administration meets with the principals of the impacted schools and the Service Unit representatives who will then plan the closure and transitioning to the new location. Part of the materials presented to principals indicates a variety of techniques for their consideration regarding the appropriate celebrations to honour the existing school and suggested activities to assist students and parents in a smooth transition. The Area Office and principals review existing resources to determine appropriate transfer where applicable.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION – COMMENTS & QUESTIONS FROM PARENTS AND PUBLIC**

Ms. Barry provided a brief review of the discussion guidelines, which are noted on the back of the *Agenda*. She reiterated that the Trustees were present to hear the public's input and that they will ultimately be the sole decision makers regarding the status of the kindergarten to grade 6 regular program at Chris Akkerman School, and it would not be appropriate in the middle of the process for Trustees to respond directly to questions or to engage in debate. She asked that questions be directed to her and she would provide a response or she would direct the question to an appropriate Calgary Board of Education administrator for response.

**Mr. C. McChesney** referred to the Traditional Learning Centre program and questioned the meaning of the statement "suitable for placement".

Ms. Barry noted that the Traditional Learning Centre program has a particular philosophy in its approach to teaching and learning. It is a traditional learning style where it is more teacher directed, rather than student inquiry based, and this particular style of learning is what is reviewed when determining the suitable placement of a student into the program.

**Ms. C. Henderson** expressed frustration and the belief that there is no consideration being given to the students and families of Chris Akkerman School and that the majority of focus is on the Traditional Learning Centre program and on Marlborough School.

**Ms. S. Finstad**, parent, noted that Chris Akkerman School currently provides a full-day kindergarten program and she questioned whether or not the same is offered at Marlborough School.

Ms. D. Selby responded that each year the student profiles of each of our schools is reviewed to determine whether or not a full-day kindergarten program can be offered and so the ability to offer a full day kindergarten in any particular school may change from year to year.

**Ms. A. McChesney** asked if other options were available to students in the area who may not wish to attend Marlborough School.

Ms. Barry noted that students who choose not to attend their designated school may apply to the school of their choice as an out of attendance area student. The decision to accept an out of attendance area student is made by the principal, who looks at the availability of space and resources within the school.

**Ms. S. Cox** asked if consideration was given to moving the portables to Marlborough School to address the excess capacity at Chris Akkerman School; and, keeping the regular program open and allowing the community students to continue to walk to their neighbourhood school. She noted that most of the students who attend Chris Akkerman School for the Traditional Learning Centre program are bused in from other communities.

Ms. Barry noted that the move of portables would be at a significant cost to the Calgary Board of Education and in this particular situation it was not a consideration. In terms of long-term planning, it is believed not necessary to incur those costs at this time.

**Ms. T. Kelm**, Executive Director of the Marlborough Day Nursery, expressed her belief that no consideration is being given to the after school needs of the children in the community. She noted that this is the only daycare program in the community of Marlborough. Ms. Kelm stated that the daycare is situated outside of the proposed bus zone. She shared comments about the proposed movement back and forth of students, noting her belief that there will be excessive moves for some students, which would be disruptive and unfair to them. Ms. Kelm expressed concern with a recent incident where she believed a child had wandered away from Marlborough School.

Ms. Barry said it is understood that childcare can be an issue for parents and it is one of the factors that was looked at, but not the only factor. She noted that Administration is exploring the possibility of before and after school care in Marlborough School.

**Mr. C. Cox**, parent of two children attending Chris Akkerman School, shared his belief that the impact to children is that they have a school that is close to where they live, yet they have to attend a different school that is much further away and that they might have to walk to alone. He noted his biggest concern is for the safety of those children who might have to walk alone.

Ms. Barry said transportation will be available from a portion of the Marlborough community and those who wish to access this could apply as a conditional rider.

**Ms. K. Medynski**, parent, noted her family bought a home in the community because it has both an elementary and a junior high school within walking distance. She stated her daughter currently has a sitter that she trusts. Ms. Medynski stated she will now have to find a different sitter that is trustworthy or she will be faced with having to pay for busing as well as for a lunch program, which she can't afford.

Ms. Barry said it is understood that those fees are a challenge for some families. She pointed out that parents of students eligible for transportation who are experiencing financial difficulties may apply for a waiver of the transportation fee(s). She noted that the lunchroom fee is included in the transportation fee.

**Ms. C. Walker**, parent, shared that having access to the Marlborough Day Nursery is very important for her because she is a single parent and receives daycare subsidy. She noted that her child will be entering Kindergarten this coming September, and if Chris Akkerman School closes she will have to find before and after school care that takes families on subsidy and, because they live outside of the walk zone, she will be expected to pay the transportation fee.

**Ms. S. Bodie** noted she took part in the focus group discussions and attended the open house. She stated that she does not feel the Calgary Board of Education is willing to work with the Chris Akkerman School community and is not bringing any alternatives to the table. She noted that she understands the need for the Board to address the issue of excess capacity, but asks that appropriate bus zones be provided and, specifically, that a bus stop be placed in front of the Marlborough Day Nursery.

Ms. Barry stated that some of the students who attend the Marlborough Day Nursery may be eligible for busing. Mr. Carlton added that the concerns with this issue are being heard and he noted that the

Administration will further review the matter. There may potentially be bus stops close by the Nursery if it is warranted, dependent on where the students live who agree to sign on for bus service.

**Ms. T. Kelm** said the Day Nursery currently has 16 children that attend Chris Akkerman School and that it is not possible for them to put half of those children on the bus and walk the other half. They are not in a position to finance transportation for the students to get them to and from school. She requested that the students who attend the Day Nursery for before and after school care, be given eligible busing status.

Mr. Carlton commented that there are many daycares and dayhomes throughout the city who provide expert service as well as Marlborough Day Nursery and who also face similar circumstances. He stated that the Calgary Board of Education is unable to attend to all of the requests it receives that are not within the fiscal capacity of the funding we receive. He reiterated that students who attend the Marlborough Day Nursery who are not eligible for subsidized transportation could apply for the bus service as conditional riders, but there is no guarantee that they would be eligible.

**Ms. C. Henderson** noted that the bus already travels on the road that passes the Marlborough Day Nursery. She stated the belief that busing is an important matter because there are safety issues in the community.

Ms. Barry said that the transportation and walk zones for Marlborough School were scrutinized and found to be well within the guidelines, which are applied to every school within the Calgary Board of Education. She noted that Administration looked at the location of the Marlborough Day Nursery, in regards to the transportation service area, and it is believed there could be a number of bus stops close to the daycare. However, as stated earlier, until we receive the contracts from those parents whose children are eligible to take the bus, we won't know where those bus stops will be placed.

Mr. Carlton added that bus stops are placed within 800 metres of a student's residence; and whether or not there will be a bus stop directly across from the daycare, can't be guaranteed. He pointed out there are a number of factors that are taken into consideration of where the bus stop is placed, including, but not limited to, safety, openness and green space availability, permission of the home owners whose properties are adjacent to that stop.

**Ms. S. Bodie** asked about the possibility of assuring that a bus stop could be placed in front of Chris Akkerman School to accommodate the community students to and from Marlborough School.

Mr. Carlton stated that it might not fit with the criteria for the placement of a bus stop within 800 metres of the closest student's residence. Until it is known who will be riding the bus, the stops can't be determined. He reiterated that the concerns of parents will be taken back for review to see how best to address those concerns and at the same time be fiscally responsible and also be able to attend to the needs of all students.

**Ms. Bodie** responded that to be fiscally responsible it makes more sense to pick up a larger number of children at one bus stop rather than driving around the neighbourhood.

Ms. Barry stated that following the last community engagement meeting with parents and stakeholders, she took that suggestion back to the Transportation Advisory Committee, as requested, and it was reviewed once again. Final determination of bus stop locations will be made once we know where the students who are riding the bus reside.

**Ms. Y. Soper**, parent of a child at Chris Akkerman School, noted her child goes to the Marlborough daycare for the morning. She said that even though they do not live within the proposed bus zone, she will have to have her son take the bus home after school.

**Mr. C. McChesney** questioned when it was that this matter was originally taken to the Board of Trustees and what the vote was.

Ms. Barry stated that the recommendation for the proposed accommodation plan for Chris Akkerman School and Marlborough School was taken to the Board on January 19, 2010 – that the minutes of that

meeting are posted on the Calgary Board of Education website. The vote was to proceed with a consideration of closure process and that vote was passed unanimously by the Board of Trustees.

**Ms. S. Cox** expressed her concerns over the added costs to parents for transportation services and for lunchroom fees. She asked about the school hours and lunch break at Marlborough School.

It was noted that the school hours at Marlborough School are 8:10 a.m. to 2:35 p.m.; the lunch break is from 11:45 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Those times can change slightly each year.

**Ms. H. Mowat**, former teacher, noted her belief that the process followed by Trustees seems to be a consensus approach. She stated her belief that the current Board does not appropriately represent the public.

**Ms. S. Paul** noted her children live within the proposed bus zone to Marlborough School. She shared her belief that there are many safety hazards for children, both young and old, who walk along Marlborough Drive. She expressed her sympathy to parents who can not afford these additional costs.

**Ms. S. Bodie** questioned whether there were long-term plans for the Traditional Learning Centre.

Ms. Barry said that Administration is presently working with the Director of Area III in planning the long-term sustainability for the program. She noted that parents are showing a great deal of interest in this program at Chris Akkerman School, and a move of the program is not anticipated. In regards to a question of busing needs in the future, Mr. Carlton noted that with the growth of our city and the continued annexation of lands, which expands the city boundaries further out, we do not anticipate an end to the need for busing any time soon.

**Ms. L. McGuire**, parent, expressed her opinion that six months is a short time for parents to plan for the future educational needs of their children.

Ms. Barry noted that system-wide student accommodation is reviewed each spring by Community Engagement and Operational Planning (CEOP) staff with the CBE area directors and school principals. The review takes into consideration any upcoming challenges on the three-year system student accommodation plan.

**Ms. H. Mowat** commented on the promotion of the Traditional Learning Centre by the Calgary Board of Education and suggested that parents look closely at it. She noted her belief that the program is highly directed and highly controlled, rather than using exploratory and inquiry-based methods that allow the child to discern, learn and grow.

Ms. Barry noted there are different values for all parents in our community, and that the Traditional Learning Centre program is one of many options and choices that are open to parents and students of the Calgary Board of Education.

**Ms. T. Lee**, parent, shared her disappointment that the young children of Chris Akkerman School are being considered for a move, while statements continue to be heard and written by the CBE that attempts are being made to accommodate as many of the youngest students closer to their homes.

Ms. Barry stated that there will be a school remaining in the Marlborough community.

**Ms. A. McChesney** asked what process will be in place to make this a smooth and safe transition for students.

Ms. Barry reminded Ms. McChesney that we are still in the consideration phase, and that a decision has not yet been made.

Mr. Carlton explained that whenever the Board of Trustees makes a decision to close a program or a school there are obligations put on the CEOP staff to bring together the principals of the impacted schools and the

service unit representatives who will support the transition of students. There is a whole list of activities that principals can review to see which ones would be most applicable to them. He noted it is expected that the Board of Trustees will be making a decision on this particular matter around the end of March; if a motion is passed to close the regular program at Chris Akkerman School, it is likely that the transition planning would occur immediately after the spring break.

**Mr. C. Cox** noted that there would be 70 students who would walk to school if the regular program at Chris Akkerman School closes and if none of those families applies for the transportation service; but if it does not close, there would only be 40 students who would have to walk to Chris Akkerman School from the Marlborough residential district. He shared that with respect to the transportation fee waiver, he has been unable to access the subsidy because of his earnings being a little above the required amount. He expressed frustration that parents are expected to have to pay more money. Mr. Cox shared that his biggest issue is with the safety of the children.

**Ms. C. Henderson** questioned whether the Calgary Board of Education had a backup plan if the closure of the regular program at Chris Akkerman School were not approved by the Board.

Administration noted that the student accommodation in Area III would be revisited, which would include a review of the future needs of the Traditional Learning Centre program and its expected growth; and the excess capacity at Marlborough School.

**Mr. C. McChesney** asked about the funding received for students who attend an alternative program.

Mr. Carlton stated that all schools are funded based on a per pupil grant and on student profiles. It is the same per pupil funding regardless if a student is enrolled in a regular program or in a program of choice. He reiterated that it is an obligation of the Calgary Board of Education to be fiscally responsible and those funds also have to be distributed to support the plant operations and maintenance across the entire system, and one way that this is achieved is through the effective utilization of our spaces.

**Ms. C. Walker** noted her understanding from research of the Traditional Learning Centre program is that it is a program for students who learn at the average to above average level. She noted that she has a five-year old child and she asked how her daughter would be evaluated for such a program.

Deputy Chief Superintendent Stevenson noted his support of a comment made earlier, encouraging parents to do some research. He noted there is some information about the program that is available on our website; the principals of the Traditional Learning Centre programs have knowledge that they can share; and there is an integrity document for the program that explains how the program is organized and what the purpose of that is. In the early grades there are very few children that would be refused placement in the program for any particular reason. It is a program with an intentional focus on character education and it is for students who learn best in a teacher led environment. There are children with a variety of abilities in the Traditional Learning Centre program, particularly in kindergarten to grade 6. However, the program has a focus on academic rigour that all parents should be aware of; it is not for every child and the Calgary Board of Education is not trying to claim that it is.

**Ms. H. Mowat** shared her belief that the Arts in the Traditional Learning Centre program are also highly structured and in her mind that inhibits creativity, individualism and innovation.

**Mr. S. Paul** questioned whether there might be a transitioning of students from the regular program into the Traditional Learning Centre program, in the event the regular program at Chris Akkerman School is closed and parents choose the alternative program.

Deputy Chief Superintendent Stevenson said that immediately upon the decision, whether it is a decision to go ahead with the closure or not to go ahead, principals will be working with parents as well as their staff to look at how best to support students in going forward.

**Ms. Y. Soper** shared her understanding that parents sign a contract-type document stating that they will keep up with their children's work from the Traditional Learning Centre program. She noted that for her, personally, that is too much of an expectation because she works a full day.

In response to her question of the location of Saddle Ridge, it was confirmed that it is located in Area III.

**Mr. C. Cox** noted he would not want to be in the position of a Trustee because they are being handed a choice of either closing a school or doing nothing. He stated that Trustees should be given options or alternatives as to how to be fiscally responsible and, at the same time, keeping the majority of their public happy.

**Mr. O. Fech** noted the public has spoken, but he was not of the belief that Trustees have heard what was expressed. He commented that Trustees work for the taxpayers. He shared his belief that schools should continue to be functional in our communities. Mr. Fech expressed his opinion that the Board of Trustees should make their decision regarding the proposed closure of the program this evening.

Mr. Carlton responded that the Board of Trustees has only one employee and that is the Chief Superintendent. He stated that in this regulatory process, the only people to make the decision are the Board of Trustees; that is why they hold these public meetings – so they can hear what the public has to say.

**Ms. S. Bodie** commented that it is obvious that the community that is present at this meeting are opposed to this program accommodation plan. She stated that the main question in this matter is what are the alternatives to closure? She pointed out that students attending the Traditional Learning Centre program are bused to the school; and she wondered if we couldn't maintain the schools in the community as they currently operate with their community-based programs, and bus in more children to the schools.

Ms. Barry reiterated that an annual and ongoing student accommodation planning process takes place in consultation with area directors of all areas of the city. She assured that other alternatives were looked at around accommodating all of the students, not only in the Marlborough area, but throughout all of Area III. The immediate challenge was the opening of Saddle Ridge School which results in Marlborough School having a significant decline in its student population. This is similar to the effects on Chris Akkerman School with the opening of Taradale School, at which time it was decided to bring into the school the Traditional Learning Centre program to decrease the excess capacity at the school. The issue now is that there are two schools in close proximity to one another that each offers a regular program that is unsustainable.

**Ms. S. Paul** questioned whether an alternative to closure might be to keep the community in both Chris Akkerman and in Marlborough and split up the Traditional Learning Centre program and offer it at both schools.

Ms. Barry stated that the Administration had contemplated such a scenario but found there was not enough capacity at Marlborough School to offer the two programs.

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

Ms. Barry directed attention to the back of the *Agenda* and reminded those in attendance that follow-up questions from this meeting must be received by the Calgary Board of Education on or before 12:00 noon on Monday, March 22, 2010 and written submissions must be received by 9:00 a.m. on Tuesday, March 23, 2010. She pointed out that it is not possible to direct personal responses to each question; that all questions submitted would be reviewed for relevancy and repetitiveness and those selected for response would be answered on the Calgary Board of Education website at <http://www.cbe.ab.ca>.

She thanked everybody for attending the meeting and for providing respectful comments and input. She noted that the Board of Trustees have indicated that they anticipate making a decision regarding this closure consideration on or about Tuesday, March 23, 2010. The public's observations, comments and questions are valued and will form part of the material that Trustees will consider as they review the matter

and ultimately reach a decision. She advised that the public's input at this meeting has been an important contribution to the Board's decision-making process.

Ms. Barry declared the meeting closed at 8:47 p.m.

Note to Reader:

The Minutes of the Public Meeting re: Discussion Respecting Consideration of Closure of the Regular Program (Kindergarten to Grade 6) at Chris Akkerman School, held in the gymnasium, 5004 Marbank Drive NE, Calgary, Alberta on Monday, February 22, 2010 at 7:00 p.m. include the major points of discussion - they are not a verbatim transcript of the meeting.