

February 27, 2019

To: Parents and Community Stakeholders who are part of **St. Mary's Catholic School Community**

At the February 25, 2019 Regular Board Meeting the Board of Trustees passed the following motion,

"That the Board of Trustees direct the Superintendent to develop a series of Community Consultations to assist the Board in determining if St. Mary's Sexsmith should continue to offer Grades 10-12 or should close and direct the student to St. John Paul II" **Carried**

In Alberta, the *Closure of Schools Regulation* requires the Board of Trustees to follow a specific process and present information in a factual manner when they are considering the closure of a school, or in this case, the closure of three consecutive grades operated by the Board.

As a result of this motion, we are hosting a community meeting on **Tuesday March 19th at 6 PM at St. Mary Catholic School in Sexsmith, AB.**

At the Meeting we plan to present information and receive feedback related to the following areas:

- a) **The Attendance Area.** If approved, students in Grades 10-12 would be bussed to St. John Paul II Catholic School in Grande Prairie. In 2019-2020, Grade 12 students would attend St. Joe's as St. John Paul II will not offer Grade 12 until the following year. Transportation is already in place to bus students from St. Mary's to St. John Paul II or St. Joe's because the transportation systems is already design to transport students from the area to K-12 French Immersion schools.
- b) **Impact on Other Schools.** With approximately 15 students in each grade in St. Mary's high school, the addition of 45 students will not have a significant impact on St. John Paul II Catholic School as the school is designed to accommodate up to 1000 students. St. Joe's is also design to accommodate 1000 students. In 2019-2020 St. Joe's will be home to 800 students. Currently 435 students attend St. John Paul, and an estimated 610 students will attend the school in 2019-2020. Students in both City Schools are grouped in Families & Pods, creating a sense of Community within the school.
- c) **Information on the Board's Long-Term Capital Plan.** In the Grande Prairie – Sexsmith – Beaverlodge area, the plan is to open a 650 student K-9 Catholic School in 2023 in the Kensington Neighborhood (west end of Grande Prairie), a second 650 student K-6 Catholic school sometime in the future and located near the new Hospital. A third 650 student school is scheduled to open in the Clairmont West or North Grande Prairie area. We also plan to build a third high school in the Northwest corner of Grande Prairie. We have worked with the City of Grande Prairie & Grande Prairie Public, planning for the next 50 years to ensure school sites are readily available. If the change to St. Mary's is approved by the Board, St. Mary's will remain as a viable Pre-K to Grade 9 school, just like St. Mary in Beaverlodge. K-9 schools are highly successful Catholic schools.
- d) **Number of Students needing to Relocate.** We estimate that 14 students in Grade 10, 16 students in Grade 11, and 2 students in Grade 12 will need to relocate. We believe that approximately 15-20 students will need to relocate every year.

- e) **Impact on Bussing.** We believe there will be a negligible impact on bussing as there is adequate space on the current Immersion bus that leaves the area and travel to St. John Paul II and St. Joe's. The ride time from St. Mary's to St. John Paul II is approximately 19 minutes (20 km) school-to-school during the afternoon hour rush.
- f) **Program Implications.** If students are moved to St. John Paul II for Grades 10-12 they will have access to speciality programs like Culinary Arts, Theatrical Arts, Welding, Construction, Athletic Development, Child Care Development, Athletic Development, and other unique options.
- g) **Financial Implications.** Currently we allocate 3.4 FTE teachers to the high school. If the Grade 10-12 division was closed, we would transfer those funds into the staffing fund for other schools, with a portion of the FTE going to assist staffing at St. John Paul II Catholic School. Each teacher FTE costs approximately \$101,000. Other services at St. Mary's would be adjusted including educational assistant time, school secretary time, and custodial time. The formulas for teachers and support staff are established at budget time.

If St. Mary's high school would remain open, the \$350,000 allocated to Grades 10-12 would be revised to approximately 2.28 FTE, or \$230,000, as the Grade 12 population is extremely low. The decision is under consideration because the Board seeks to provide the students with a wide range of high school options and ensure viability of all programs. Currently in St. Mary's class sizes are extremely small, with some classes with only a couple of students in specialty courses. The overall student to teacher ratio is 8:1 while other high schools are more in the range of 21:1.

- h) **What will happen to the three Modular Classrooms in St. Mary's?** Annually we report our utilization to the Province. If needed, the modular classrooms will be relocated to one of our Catholic schools no sooner than 2020-2021. If the modular classrooms are needed in St. Mary's, based on the provincial formula, they will remain at the school.
- i) **Is the future of Catholic Education in Sexsmith in jeopardy?** No! Catholic education is a part of our community and will remain a choice for decades to come. Our staff offer a strong, faith-based education and faith-based education is a pillar of our provincial landscape.
- j) **The decision will not be considered until the Regular Board meeting on April 29th. Information Nights occurs before March 19th! What should I do?** At the March 18th meeting, we will ask parents to tell us if they are committed to attending Grades 10-12 at St. Mary's in 2019-2020; we hope to provide you with programming options at the March 19th meeting.

Information Night at St. John Paul II or St. Joe's:

March 18th 7 PM St. John Paul II Catholic School (Grade 10 & 11)

March 18th 7 PM St. Joseph Catholic High (Grade 12)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact your local Trustee or any Trustee on the Board. More importantly, join us at the March 19th meeting in Sexsmith at St. Mary's Catholic School to discuss this Board motion.

Yours in Catholic Education,



Karl Germann
Superintendent of Schools