



April 14, 2022

Carma Williams, Warden
United Counties of Stormont Dundas Glengarry
Corporate Services Department
323 – 26 Pitt Street
Cornwall, Ontario K6J 3P2

sent via email: carmawilliams@northglengarry.ca

Dear Warden Williams,

We appreciate SD&G County Council's interest in rural education and in creating the best educational opportunities for our students. This is the foundational work of the Upper Canada District School Board (UCDSB) – creating futures, leading and learning for all.

In response to your recent request for the UCDSB to pause and review the planned amalgamation of North Stormont Public School and Roxmore Public School, which is scheduled for September 2022, I want to inform you that this is not an action we feel is warranted or in the best interest of students.

Many factors were examined and thoroughly reviewed during the 2017 Building for the Future Pupil Accommodation Review that led to the decision to amalgamate the two schools. Demographics and enrolment factors, as you have pointed out in your request, but also the accessibility of educational programs, childcare opportunities, and facility renewal opportunities were all considered.

Demographics and Enrolment

The Statistics Canada data you have cited, which shows a 7.7 per cent growth over the last five years in North Stormont, is on trend with the shift in migration patterns across the province, and in other areas of our district. According to the same Statistics Canada data, that's an increase of 527 people across all age groups. When compared to population data trends, this equates to approximately 100 additional school-age children over the last five years to the area. While demographic numbers fluctuate year-to-year, alongside the choice of school board that students choose to attend, enrolment data and demographic trends do not indicate that there would be a sizeable increase in enrolment to warrant reversing the decision to consolidate North Stormont PS with Roxmore PS.

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We regularly review population trends to ensure we are prepared to support accommodation and program strategies for students across our school district on a Family of Schools level. For the 2022-23 school year, the Tagwi Family of Schools includes Avonmore/Roxmore Public School, Maxville Public School, Longue Sault Public School and Rothwell-Osnabruck Elementary School as feeder schools to Tagwi Secondary School. At this time, there are more than 1,000 surplus student spaces in these schools. These surplus spaces will allow us to accommodate increased growth to the area, if required.

Educational Programming

Providing innovative and responsive programs to address the learning needs of students is a priority within the UCDSB. This includes the need to give students equitable access to program opportunities, which was a key driver in the 2017 decision to amalgamate the two schools, and this rationale continues to exist today.

The consolidation of North Stormont PS with Roxmore PS will ensure French and English dual-track programming is available to all public elementary students in the municipality of North Stormont. All students will have the choice of French Immersion or English (with Core French) within the same school. To note, at the time of the initial decision, there were a number of students from the North Stormont PS area already attending Roxmore PS for programming reasons, and this has continued to be the trend.

Also, a larger student body will limit the number of multi-grade classes that are often present in schools with lower enrolment.

A larger student body and increased staff members can also optimize opportunities for extra-curricular activities and events that are an integral part of school life.

Before/After School Programs and Community Childcare

Before and after school care providers require a minimum number of participants to remain viable, and the combined population of these two schools will ensure this service remains in place for area families.

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Also, because of the decision to amalgamate the schools, the Ministry of Education provided funding to renew and expand the childcare spaces at Roxmore PS. Construction is now complete and full-day childcare for children 0–4 years of age is currently in place. This is an important new service for our community.

Facility Renewal

Roxmore Public School has recently undergone a significant renewal and expansion project to meet the needs of consolidating these two schools. A \$3.8 million investment saw the addition of six classrooms (equivalent to 138 pupil spaces), expansion and renewal of daycare facilities (as mentioned above) and other improvements within and outside the school.

The Roxmore and North Stormont school communities have dedicated significant time and effort to ensure a positive transition for students, staff and families to the new shared space of Avonmore Public School come September 2022. Students and staff from both schools continue to collaborate on deciding new school colours, a new mascot, a new school crest and to design school clothing for all to wear with pride. New friendships are being formed during these transition activities in anticipation of coming together in the fall.

We are confident that moving forward with our current plans to amalgamate the two schools effective September 2022 is in the best interest of the students, staff and community of North Stormont.

Reversing this decision would dishonour the funding agreement that the UCDSB entered into with the Ministry of Education. But it would also make all the work and excitement created between the two school communities for nothing, and go against what we believe needs to be done to fulfill our mission to prepare all students for a successful life.

Respectfully,

~ Original document to follow by Canada Post ~

John McAllister,
Chair of the Upper Canada District School Board

cc: UCDSB Board of Trustees
Ron Ferguson, Director of Education and Secretary of the Board

March 22, 2022

Upper Canada District School Board
Attn: Chair McAllister & Board of Trustees
225 Central Avenue West
Brockville, ON K6V 5X1

Via email to john.mcallister@ucdsb.on.ca

Dear Chair McAllister and Board members:

At it's March 21st session, County Council authorized me to direct correspondence to the Board with regard to the impending closure of the North Stormont Public School in Berwick at the end of this school year. As you know, we have established an education working group, whose mandate is to advocate for educational equity for students across Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

Our ask is simple – that the Board pause the closure of the school, and undertake a review of the decision to permanently close this facility. We are requesting this pause for two main reasons:

- The 2022 Statistics Canada census data was recently released. This data indicates that North Stormont leads the way in growth throughout SDG, growing by 7.2% in the preceding 5 years. Much of this growth has occurred in the Crysler and Moose Creek areas, which is proximal the North Stormont Public School. The growth in this area is not only expected to continue, but to increase in the future.
- We understand that the enrolment data for the school in 2019/2020 was 102 students, considerably more than the 63 students projected by the Board in 2015-2016 when the decision to close the school was made. The lower enrolment of 71 students in 2021/2022 is a result of discontinuing enrolment at this school. The much higher than expected enrolment is an indication of the growth in the area, and we believe a compelling reason to re-examine the matter.

We ask that this matter be brought to the attention of the Board as soon as possible, and that we be advised in writing of the Board's decision, including reasons therefore.

Thank you,



Carma Williams
Warden