

**RESPONSE  
To  
SCHOOL REVIEW IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

Milton Centennial School



# MILTON CENTENNIAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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November, 2008

Mr. Elliott Payzant  
Chair, SSRSB  
130 North Park Street  
Bridgewater, NS, B4V 4G9

Dear Mr. Payzant:

The School Advisory Council of Milton Centennial Elementary School have prepared a response to the **School Review Impact Assessment Milton Centennial School**, dated May 27, 2008. As our response indicates, the SAC does not agree with, nor do we support the conclusions set out in this document.

To reiterate our basic position, we believe that Milton Centennial offers our children a unique educational setting dedicated to meeting the needs of our youngest students. The Primary-One configuration, while unconventional, supports exceptional programming and a school-wide focus on early education. As a result, student achievement is above average. We believe that Milton Centennial should be regarded as a model of what can be accomplished.

That being said, the SAC also acknowledges the impact of declining enrolments across the region, and the long-term implications of these trends for education. Our proposal urges Board members to consider the adoption of a **strategic plan** for South Queens that will best meet the needs of all students in the system, limit disruption within the school community, and facilitate a smooth transition as the change process moves forward.

In brief, the SAC maintains that a timeline for the closure of Milton Centennial should be set within a five to seven year target and should be contingent upon the SSRSB receiving funds for a capital project to replace SQJHS with a new middle school. We believe that Milton Centennial requires minimal expenditure to continue functioning as an educational facility during this timeframe and that any earlier closure would result in a negative impact on students attending Milton Centennial, Dr. John C. Wickwire, South Queens Junior High and Liverpool Regional High School.

We look forward to working with you as together we seek solutions that will benefit the children in South Queens. We also welcome an opportunity to meet with Board members to discuss our formal response to the Impact Assessment.

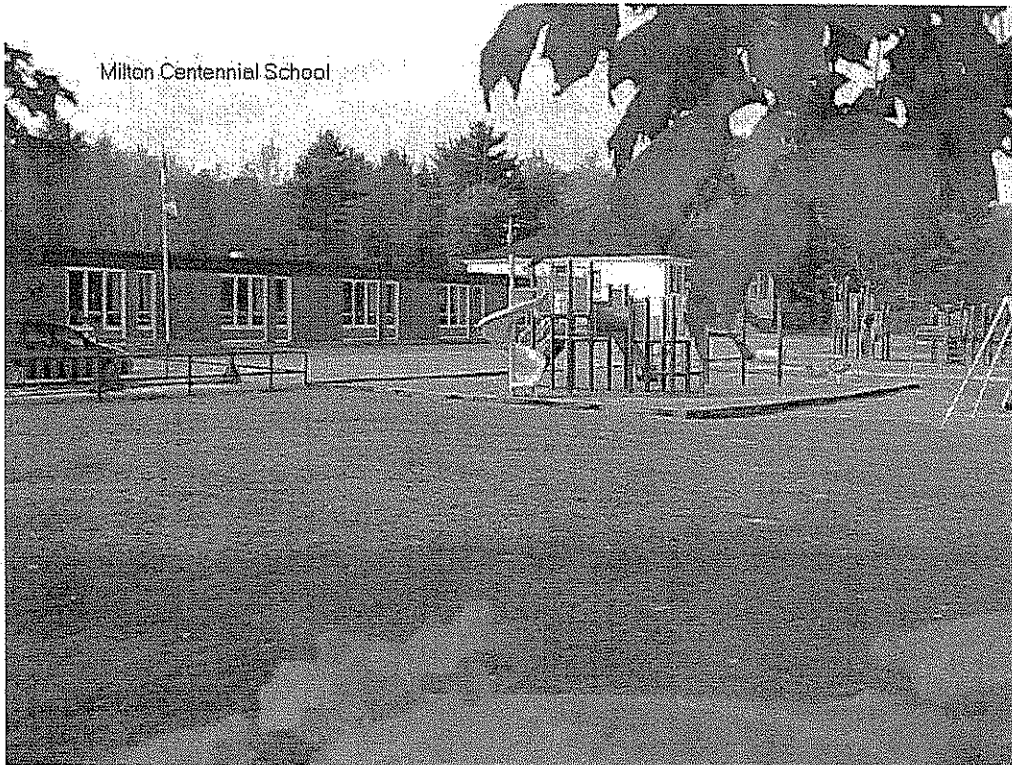
Yours truly,

Elizabeth Brown  
SAC Co-chair

Margo Walsh-Leaman SAC Chair

# **MILTON CENTENNIAL SCHOOL**

## **School Advisory Council Response to School Review Impact Assessment Report Milton Centennial School (May 27, 2008)**



**November, 2008**

**Mission Statement:**

**This we believe . . .**

**Milton Centennial School, in partnership with family and community, will provide a safe, nurturing environment where all children are provided with opportunities to achieve their potential.**

## **Part 1 School Information:**

### Enrolment History & Projection:

#### **History**

2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	Decrease	%
175	154	142	163	138	37	21%

#### **Projection**

2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Decrease	%
128	120	112	104	96	32	25%

(Impact Assessment Report...)

As Dr. Gunn states in his report,

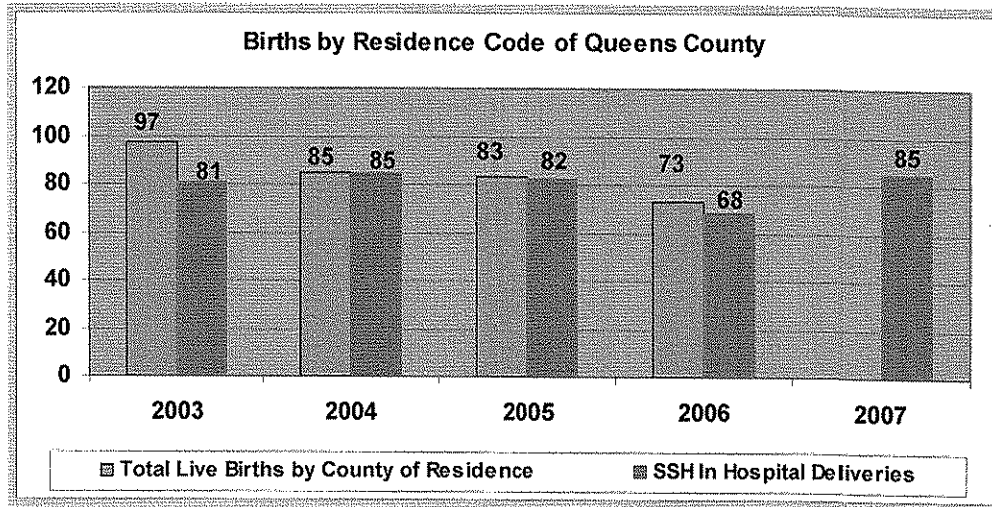
It is important to note that the Grade Primary enrolments can only be based on the recent historical trend for Grade Primary. The projections would be more accurate if Grade Primary enrolments could be predicted using Department of Health pre-school children data, but this type of data can no longer be accessed by school boards as in the past. Given that Milton Centennial School has only Grade Primary and Grade 1 means that half of the total enrolment cannot be predicted accurately with actual numbers of children who are ready to enter Grade Primary. (pp. 1-2)

#### **Response:**

Based on the enrolment history over a five year period, Dr. Gunn chose to use 25% as a rate of decline for the next five year projection. While this may appear to be a reasonable method by which to determine a 'projection', it is at best an 'educated guess'.

Local doctors report an increase in the birthrate for Queens County residents in 2007 with between 90-100 babies being born, the majority of whom are residents of the Milton Centennial catchment area. Assuming that at least 80 of these students enter the system in 2011, and assuming that current Primary trends continue to fall between 60-70 students (74 students registered in Grade Primary in September 2008) then we anticipate Milton's enrolments numbers to hold steady in the range of 130-140 students.

The following statistics, provided to Margo Walsh-Leaman, Vice-Chair, Queens Community Health Board, support this assertion and show an increase beyond our original conservative estimates.



This graph demonstrates the number of births for residents of Queens County no matter of place of occurrence (*Total Live Births by County of Residence*) and those residents of Queens County who had an in hospital delivery within South Shore Health (*SSH In Hospital Deliveries*) by calendar year.

At this time Vital Statistics does not have data available for calendar year 2007 but values on the Department of Health Cognos cubes which houses information submitted to CIHI (The Canadian Institute for Health Information) including all reporting facilities within the Province and there are 9 babies born as residents of Queens County which brings the total for 2007 to 94. \* Numbers are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances.

(Source: *Nova Scotia Annual Report, Service Nova Scotia and Municipal Relations Vital Statistics (2006, 2005, 2004, 2003)*; *DoH Cognos Cubes*)

Based on this information, we can project the following enrolments:

Year	Primary	Grade One	Total
2009-10	83	74	157
2010-11	73	83	156
2011-12	94	73	167

(Impact Assessment Report...)

Dr. Gunn acknowledges that a municipal planning project, in the development of a new multi-purpose recreational facility is underway. With regard to this project, Dr. Gunn states,

With this, some interest has been expressed about a new commercial and residential development in the area. (p. 2)

Members of the local business community, including several members of the SAC, predict that Queens Place will be an asset to the community and will attract young families to the area. The recreation complex has already begun to spark spin-off development; a new motel is scheduled to begin construction adjacent to the complex.

With respect to larger employers in the area, there is no immediate reason to anticipate any significant changes in the local economy. The Abitibi-Bowater paper mill continues to be among the most profitable of mills in the organization, and continues to invest in the local economy. The company recently purchased the former Brooklyn Energy Company. Although global economic market conditions make it impossible for anyone to accurately predict what may happen in future, it would be unfair to base future community growth predictions on unfounded speculation.

### **Capital Construction Planning**

As a result of the review process to date, the South Shore Regional School Board approved alteration of a request for renovations of South Queens Junior High School to a new capital school construction request (June 19, 2008). The Milton Centennial School Advisory Council applauds this motion and fully supports the pursuit of a new Middle School for South Queens.

The importance of having a plan in place to build a suitable facility to support students in grades 6-8 is paramount to the restructuring, or reconfiguration of our local schools. We believe that SQJHS, in its current state, does not lend itself to the proposals set out in Dr. Gunn's report (Options A & C), nor do we believe that Option B (closing Milton Centennial by 2009/10 and reconfiguring DJCWA as a Primary-6 facility, with no change to SQJHS and LRHS) is in any way beneficial to students in grades P-6. Furthermore, we maintain that any pre-mature closure of Milton Centennial would be detrimental to the students of DJCWA resulting in the loss of programs/space currently utilized to support student learning opportunities (i.e. Learning Centre, Sensory room, Arts & Craft room).

### **Building Use**

The gross square footage of Milton Centennial is 15, 124 sq. ft.  
Information included in the School Review Impact Assessment:

Table 1

Teaching Space	Number	Notes
Regular classroom	11	
Gymnasium	0	
Multi-purpose room	1	For P-1 Physical Education
Cafeteria	0	
Library	1	
Music room	0	
Art room	0	
Resource room	1	
Computer room		In Library
Science lab(s)	0	Not applicable
Technology Ed.	0	Not applicable
Family Studies	0	Not applicable
Other space	1	Kitchen for hot lunch daily

Please refer to Table 2 for more accurate & detailed information.

Table 2

Teaching Space	Number	Notes
Regular classrooms	6	Currently used for classes P-1
Gymnasium	0	
Multi-purpose room	1	For P-1 Physical Education
Cafeteria	0	
Library/Computer room	1	
Music room	1	
Art room	0	
Resource room	1	
Learning Centre	1	
Reading Recovery rooms	2	3 Reading Recovery Teachers (Will be shared by Guidance as well)
Conference/Meeting room	1	
Computer room		In Library
Science lab(s)	0	Not applicable
Technology Ed.	0	Not applicable
Family Studies	0	Not applicable
Other space	1	Kitchen for hot lunch daily

### **Physical Condition of Milton Centennial School**

Dr. Gunn cites the Facility Assessment completed in 2002 by Connor Architects and Planners as the basis of many of his conclusions. This report is supplemented by a more recent assessment conducted by the Manager of Facilities Maintenance.

Based on these two 'assessments', Dr. Gunn draws the following conclusions:

(Impact Assessment Report...)

As noted at the end of Appendix A, the total estimated cost to maintain the building (excluding annual maintenance of \$8,000) is \$294,000. Normally, to expect that all of these improvements will be achieved within the next 5 years is unreasonable. It is reasonable to expect the more urgent items to have priority soon, including window, brickwork, ramps/aprons, hot water and boiler, flooring, electrical and barrier free access; these items are estimated to be about \$150,000. The school needs some upgrades soon and the cost is significant. (p. 3)

With all due respect to Dr. Gunn, the Milton Centennial SAC takes exception to these conclusions which we interpret as a gross exaggeration of the physical condition of the building and a misrepresentation of the report from which the conclusions were drawn.

The executive summary of the Connors Report clearly states that,

Carrying out these upgrades and repairs should extend the life of this building by 25 to 35 years. The cost of the upgrades and repairs along with the respective areas, relative to new construction, places value in extending life of this building for ongoing use. (Executive Summary & Overview, p. 1)

Clearly the costs associated with the recommendations deriving from the Connors Report are based on the premise that the life of the school be extended over a 25 to 35 year period. Furthermore, the Connors Report is comparing the costs associated with extending the life of the facility in relation to the prospect of building a new facility to replace it.

We, the Milton Centennial SAC, maintain that the figure of \$294,000. to extend the life of the school 25 to 35 years is a reckless use of the information contained in the Connors Report. No one, including the members of this Study Group, is attempting to argue that the school be kept operational for the next 25-35 years. Again, we recognize that due to declining enrolments, and the current condition of SQJHS, a long-term, strategic plan for reconfiguration of South Queens schools is desirable. However, we feel strongly that the time-line must be extended to a minimum of five years to facilitate appropriate planning.

Using a five-seven year time-line as a guide, the essential costs of necessary upgrades and repairs to sustain operations at Milton Centennial is reduced substantially.

The following estimated maintenance costs were cited in Appendix A: *Recent Assessment of Physical Condition of Milton Centennial School*. Our response, based on those repairs/upgrades deemed essential for a shortened period of 5-7 year life extension follows in bold.

Appendix A:

- The paving is in poor condition and should be replaced with new asphalt. The estimated cost is \$50,000.

**It is not essential that the asphalt be replaced to maintain operations in the short-term. Routine maintenance of potholes should suffice as well as two loads of gravel annually to address seasonal wash-out of the unpaved section of the bus loop.**

- Ramps and aprons should be replaced with an estimated cost of \$8,000. Existing ramps and aprons are adequate and satisfactory in the short-term. Milton Centennial has housed a number of students using wheel-chairs over the last number of years and accessibility, and safety have not been issues.

- To re-pointe/re-build brickwork is estimated at \$10,000. Only necessary is the building life-span exceeds the short-term plan being proposed.

- All windows should be replaced along with the panels; estimated cost of \$80,000.

**No problems, drafts, leaks, etc. have been reported resulting from the existing windows. We do not believe this is a valid short-term consideration.**



- Flooring replacement is ongoing depending on budget and priority.  
Flooring that needs to be replaced soon has an estimated cost of \$5,000.

**Floors have been routinely repaired as necessary (i.e. broken, chipped, loose tiles). Carpets have been removed from all areas to promote a healthier work environment. As a result, no major repairs are necessary.**

- The hot water heating mains in the boiler room and isolation valves should be replaced at an estimated cost of \$15,000.
- The boiler is past its expected life cycle. A new energy efficient boiler should be installed at an estimated cost of \$15,000.
- Because of a leak, two 250-gallon tanks were installed for temporary use this year. New above ground tanks will be permanently installed this summer. The estimated cost is \$3000.

**The tanks need to be permanently installed regardless of whether the Milton School Review results in closure in 2009 or not. The oil leak was an unfortunate and unforeseen expenditure that could happen in any location. This will cost an estimated \$3000.**

- To replace and relocate main electrical and original panel boards has an estimated cost of \$40,000. To replace lamps & ballast with T-8 and electronic ballast has an estimated cost of \$5,000.
- Indoor air quality and environmental issues: There are air quality problems in the school. The only ventilation is provided by exhaust fans. This causes problems when doors are opening because contaminants and water vapour are drawn into the building-due to the negative pressure caused by the exhaust fans. The best solution would be a simple air exchange system with an approximate cost of \$40,000.

**Environmental issues associated with air quality concerns have been well-documented and originated with a decaying insect nest beneath a classroom window (2002) and leaks from the roof prior to a new roof being installed (2005). Since those issues were addressed, and thanks to a thorough cleaning of the school's interior including: purging of carpets and drapes, installation of blinds, purging of stuffed toys, old boxes, papers and books, cleaning and painting of interior, there have been no further issues arising directly from air quality.**

**Concerns that have arisen since 2006 have been related to sensitivities to cleaning products or scented products worn by members of the public while in the school.**

**Recently photocopiers were moved to meet Fire Regulations. They have been placed in well-ventilated areas and an exhaust fan has been installed in the workroom where no natural ventilation was available.**

**This assessment report is the first time that operations personnel have stated in writing that Milton Centennial has 'an air quality' problem. Documented reports**

and air quality tests conducted as a result of OHS requests have given the school a clean bill of health and are readily available in the OHS records kept at the school.

- Costs associated with maintenance, repair and operation exceeding normal expectations: Actual maintenance costs for the last fiscal year were \$8,000. and the estimated maintenance cost ongoing is the same amount.
- Ability to provide barrier free accessibility to the buildings and grounds: To construct ramps, install lever door knobs and automatic openers on main entrance doors has an estimated cost of \$8000. To upgrade washrooms for barrier free access is estimated at \$20,000.

The existing ramps facilitate wheel-chair access to the school. Lever door knobs and an automatic opener should be considered on the main entrance, but only if such expenditure is also deemed a priority at other aging buildings in the region (i.e. Mill Village-which is not a barrier-free building). How many buildings lack an automatic door opener? A barrier-free, wheel-chair accessible washroom is available and is used by students as well as a private change-table area for students who require its use.

- The total estimated cost to maintain the building, excluding maintenance, is \$294,000.

Again, this figure is based on the recommendations contained in the Connors Report which examined the feasibility of extending the life of the school 25-35 years. Therefore, this figure is invalid as it does not represent necessary short-term expenditures.

Recent information, provided by Barry Butler, Director of Operations, SSRSB, indicates that \$100,000. would cover critical upgrades. Mr. Butler reports:

Based on the items required I would estimate that \$100,000 would be enough to complete the more critical upgrades needed to get the school through the next 5 years.

The capital upgrades that should be completed at Milton Centennial in the short term include:

- Paving
- Ramps and Aprons
- Barrier free access
- Brick repointing
- Heating system upgrades

The SAC believes that this reduced estimate may still be somewhat high. We recommend that at least one other independent opinion be pursued.

## **Part 2: Impact Analysis**

### **Capability of MCS to Deliver the Public School Program (PSP)**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

From a facility perspective Dr. Gunn writes:

Within a few limitations as a facility, Milton Centennial School has been able to facilitate the delivery of the public school program and there is no reason to suggest that the facility will become a barrier to successful program delivery if the status quo remains. This assessment is made with the assumption that the urgent and major maintenance requirements will be completed in a timely fashion.

The obvious physical or facility limitations that define the status quo are lack of a modern gymnasium and a cafeteria. (p.4)

**As Dr. Gunn asserts, the facility has not presented any barriers to the successful delivery of the PSP. The 'urgent' and 'major' maintenance requirements referred to in this section of the report have been previously discussed; we believe the requirements are substantially reduced when a reasonable timeline of 5-7 years life span is considered.**

**The lack of a modern gymnasium does not limit nor in any way impede the ability of Milton Centennial to deliver the Physical Education program at the P-1 level. We concur that it would pose difficulties given a higher grade configuration, but this is not the case at Milton Centennial. Nor does the lack of a cafeteria have any relevance to the ability of the school to deliver the PSP, however since the issue was raised by Dr. Gunn, it merits a response from the school community. Parents and guardians are very happy with the daily hot lunch program offered at the school. The lunch program adheres to the provincial Food and Nutrition Policy and volunteers have been trained in proper food handling. Menu prices are kept affordable as the program is not run for profit.**

### **Educational Benefits**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

Dr. Gunn reports:

From an Educational Perspective: There is no evidence to suggest that Milton Centennial School is or will be unable to deliver the PSP successfully in Grades Primary and Grade 1, if the status quo remains. The reasons behind the recommendation to close this school are primarily related to operational factors which are explained in the sections below. This is not to say that no educational benefits would result in having the students attend Dr. J.C. Wickwire Academy and these are also noted below.

MCS Grade P-1 to DJCWA: Although educational benefits in transferring the Grade Primary-1 students from MCS to DJCWA are not obviously distinct in comparing the capability of each school to deliver the educational program, some potential benefits are related to school size.

Primarily they are related to economies of scale in the utilization of staff resources, especially with respect to how services of specialists on staff can be applied when grades P-5 or P-6 are in the same school. Having 6 or 7 elementary grades together potentially provides greater flexibility and capacity for a team of specialists to meet the needs of the student. (p. 4)

**The SAC would argue that school size and configuration are factors that currently benefit the students in Milton School. As long as student enrolments stay in the present range or above 100, programming/staffing is not compromised. Just as Dr. Gunn asserts that having 6 or 7 elementary grades together is an asset, we assert that having 6-7 classes of Primary and Grade 1 students enhances opportunities for staff to work collaboratively in a Professional Learning Community that focuses exclusively on the needs of early elementary students. Thus, the staff are essentially 'specialists' in terms of their knowledge, experience and skill level with regard to working with this developmental age group.**

**Directed by common goals, teams of teachers are able to coordinate programming and build common assessments. The entire staff serves as a Literacy Team gathering and analyzing data through SELL assessments. Opportunities for flexible groupings, team teaching, coaching and mentoring abound. In terms of outside specialists, we have equal access to the School Psychologist, Autism Consultant, OT/PT services, Central Office Consultants, and the Speech Language Pathologist (the bulk of her case load is providing interventions in the early years).**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

Milton Centennial School and its staff have gained a very positive reputation among parents and the community about the educational program and how it is delivered to the Grade Primary and Grade 1 students. The success of the Family Literacy Project is one example that supports this. Also, the focus on early elementary programs through the current P-1 configuration is an obvious benefit which is supported by the Reading Recovery statistics. Data collected over a seven year period suggest that, with the exception of one year, an above average number of grade students from MCS have successfully completed the program. Of 131 students who were eligible for this level of support at Milton, 107 students or 81% successfully completed the program compared with a 68% average for the Lunenburg-Queens region over the same period. Because of the unique configuration at MCS, teachers have similar grade level assignments and there is more opportunity for professional dialogue on similar expectations and best practice, in part because Reading Recovery teachers, who are highly trained, work closely with P-1 classroom teachers. Because the staff of MCS will transfer to DJCWA with the students, the level of expertise will be carried forward too. (pp. 4-5)

**The SAC was pleased to see that Dr. Gunn acknowledged the programming strengths and high academic achievement experienced at Milton Centennial. If the school closes in 2009, it is anticipated that the majority of MCS will transfer to**

DJCWA. However, the merger of the two groups will also result in some changes of assignment due to contractual agreements. The larger issue is that of school culture/climate. Milton Centennial has built a highly-effective, and positive school culture dedicated to the unique developmental needs of students aged 4-7. Quite simply, the entire school community is focused on the social, emotional, and academic characteristics of this one age group. This is an advantage that cannot be 'transferred'.

#### **Human Resources Considerations:**

A strategic plan, based on a five to seven year period would coincide with a large number of teacher retirements at both Milton Centennial and DJCWA. Beginning in 2012 and continuing into 2013, five permanent teachers on the Milton staff will be eligible for retirement. Essentially this represents almost half of the school's FTEs. At DJCWA, eight permanent staff members will be eligible to retire within the same time period. From a Human Resources and administrative perspective, this is a significant factor.

When a school closes, resulting in reconfiguration and staff merger, the reconfigured school becomes, in many respects, a 'new' school. Different group dynamics are introduced as staff become acquainted, as well as introducing a shift in clientele. The challenge for school administration is to build a new school culture that embraces these changes and redefines the identity of the school. This would be accomplished with greater ease if the timing coincided with the majority of anticipated retirements, causing less disruption and a smoother beginning for a new school community to emerge.

#### **Accreditation Considerations:**

Among the many factors contributing to the success of Milton Centennial is the school's level of commitment to the School Improvement Planning process. Milton's positive school culture, dedicated to early childhood education, evolved from this building process and was initiated long before MCS entered the Nova Scotia Accreditation Project.

During the 2006-07 school year, MCS began the Internal Review phase of the Accreditation process. During that year, the school community collected and analyzed copious amounts of data providing evidence of our strengths and identifying areas for improvement. Through this process, we developed two significant goals:

Goal 1: By June 2010, there will be a 10% increase of Grade One students who indicate an enjoyment of math, based on the student survey data collected.

Goal 2: As of June 2010, staff will report a 10% increase in their satisfaction with the amount of time spent sharing and planning as indicated by the staff survey data as we work towards defining our school as a Professional Learning Community.

**Goal 1 emerged from evidence demonstrating a contradiction between student performance and student attitudes. Although students experienced high achievement and were successful in meeting appropriate outcomes in mathematics, they also developed negative attitudes with regard to the subject at a disturbingly young age. In addition, the data clearly shows that a gender gap in attitude begins to grow at an alarming rate as early as Grade 1.**

**As a result of this information, a comprehensive school improvement plan was developed to address both issues. The plan included the purchasing of resources, intensive staff development and the building of common practices and assessments (Goal 2).**

**Analysis of Year 1 Implementation (2007-07) demonstrates that while considerable progress has been made, much more work remains.**

**As our goals state, Milton Centennial is scheduled to complete the final year of implementation by June 2010. An External Review Team will analyze our work during the 2010-11 school year. At that time, we hope to achieve accreditation status and, more importantly, we hope that our efforts will have made a long-term difference in student attitudes and learning.**

**We believe strongly in the inherent value of the Accreditation Project and the distinct school-based goals it supports and develops. The school improvement plan, and the work it represents, are non-transferrable. We further assert that our goals, if successful, will benefit our students as they continue their journey through their remaining school experience. For this reason, we vehemently oppose school closure any earlier than September 2011.**

**It is also important to note that DJCWA became an accredited school in May 2008. As a result, DJCWA will begin a new cycle of school improvement planning next year. The validity of data correlated next year will be greatly compromised should reconfiguration take place in September 2009. Should reconfiguration be set in 2013, the newly configured elementary school would be ready to begin the process anew with a relatively new staff in place. It would give the school a strong position from which it could begin to build a new identity, strengthening partnerships with the school community.**

**(Impact Assessment Report...)**

**Another educational benefit of transferring the students to DJCWA is related to grade configuration. Although any grade configuration can be made to work successfully, as in the case of MCS, the most commonly accepted configuration recommended for elementary schools is P-5 or P-6. P-8 is also supported by educational research on grade configuration. A configuration of P-1, P-2, or P-3 is not a preferred or recommended choice when designing or setting up new schools, if a choice can be made. Often, other operational factors dictate what the configuration must be. The decision to configure MCS as a P-1 school when DJCWA opened was**

based on the classroom space available and the number of students to fill these spaces.

In fact, the South Shore Regional School Board decided in 2002 to close Milton Centennial School in 2004/05, if the renovations were completed to accommodate the larger enrolments. That decision was based on both educational and operational arguments that had been developed through a thorough review process by an ad hoc committee of the Board. There is no reason to question the educational and operational reasons behind the original decision in 2002 and under the circumstances at the time.

Perhaps the most definite educational benefit of this option is to reduce the number of schools that students have to attend from Grade Primary to Grade 12. The educational research on grade configuration does make the case for keeping the number of moves from one school to another to a minimum. In this case, not only will the students of MCS have to make one less move, but also, they will be moving into a school which their siblings are already attending. Stated from another perspective, there are obvious benefits for families in not having their elementary age children attending separate elementary schools at the same time. (p.5)

**Milton Centennial's present grade configuration was determined as a matter of convenience; school enrolments in the South Queens region in 1996 exceeded student capacity at DJCWA when it opened. We agree with Dr. Gunn's observation that 'any grade configuration can be made to work successfully, as in the case of MCS'. We also concede that a P-5, P-6, or P-8 configuration is the most commonly accepted configuration recommended for elementary schools when designing or setting up new schools. However, the argument for these configurations is weighed more heavily by operational considerations and economies of scale than by any other educational benefits. Milton Centennial works! The configuration works! In many communities, a P-1 configuration would be inconceivable simply due to low enrolment numbers within that age group. However, in the South Queens sub-system, enrolment numbers have allowed us to develop a unique educational framework, which may not be conventional, but is highly effective.**

**Our greatest concern with this particular section of Dr. Gunn's report is that it dismisses the wishes of the school community and adopts a benevolent tone that suggests that others know what is best for our children and school community. Last Spring, parents and other community members made their views well known to members of the SSRSB through a proliferation of emails, petitions, letters, and other communications. Many of these families do have children at both MCS and DJCWA and they voiced their preference quite clearly; they preferred the current configuration and educational benefits and opportunities for students at each school given the current arrangement.**

**Parents, and the SAC representing the school community, have overwhelmingly supported the P-1 configuration and have repeatedly expressed the view that the benefits to younger students outweigh any 'inconvenience' related to siblings**

attending a different school, or the transition of students to DJCWA after two years of attending MCS. Milton Centennial provides an extra readiness step as children enter the school system. In their first critical years of school, students are introduced to the 'socialization' of the school experience. They become familiar with the norms, conventions, and expectations of school life and do so in a setting devoted to supporting their developmental needs. The educational benefit of having an entire staff working together to support early elementary education is an asset to the school community and is precisely what the community stands to lose.

Needless to say, we would prefer to keep MCS, or at least a P-1 configuration, permanently operational. However, we are realistic enough to realize and accept that this is highly unlikely given declining enrolments. Again, we do believe that a well-thought out plan, resulting in closure over a five-seven year period will better serve the school community than a hasty decision to close Milton Centennial in 2009. Enrolment numbers appear to have levelled off for the time being, reducing any urgency to recommend immediate closure.

(Impact Assessment Report...)

DJCWA Grade 6 to South Queens Junior High School: Just as a P-5 or P-6 configuration is supported in the professional research, a Grade 6-8 or 6-9 middle school is a recommended configuration. There is quite strong support for a Grade 6-8 configuration in which the "middle school philosophy" can be applied as the best fit. From a research perspective, it can be argued that Grade 6 students, at their stage of development, can be best served with Grade 7 and 8 students if the opportunity to set this configuration exists.

SQJHS Grade 9 to Liverpool Regional High School: There is evidence in the research that Grade 9 can fit in either the junior high or senior high configuration. Whether in junior high or senior high, the research recommends that Grade 9 students are just a bit beyond Grade 8 and not quite ready for Grade 10; they need a year of transition.

The inclusion of Grade 9 at Liverpool Regional High offers an advantage to the students in all grades because the enrolment and number of teachers would increase, thus creating greater flexibility in setting teaching assignments and student schedules to match their course selections.

(pp. 5-6)

The SAC supports the concept of creating a middle school environment for students in grades 6-8 and reconfiguring LRHS to accommodate students in Grades 9-12. We understand and acknowledge the benefits associated with housing students in this developmental age group together. We believe that similar benefits exist for keeping grades Primary-1 together, unfortunately research is lacking in this respect as such a configuration does not fit a conventional model. \* MCS is the only P-1 school in the province of Nova Scotia.



**We do believe that SQJHS must be replaced. The aging facility has a number of serious physical issues and the idea of pursuing upgrades or renovations seems redundant. We are pleased that the SSRSB has added a new facility to its capital project list. We strongly believe that the reconfiguration of schools in South Queens should center on this focal point and should not take place until enrolment numbers at MCS are at such a level as to minimize any negative impact on DJCWA, SQJHS, and LRHS. Again, according to the best projections available, this would be in 2013 at the earliest.**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

**Transportation**

Approximately 4 of the buses operating now serving MCS and DJCWA would have to complete an additional morning run. For the most part, this would not increase bus travel time for students. Students who live close to the Milton school and currently attend this school would be affected most directly. They would have to be transported to Dr. J.C. Wickwire Academy beginning in Grade Primary, instead of Grade 2, as is the case now. It is reasonable to expect a minimal increase in transportation costs because 4 buses would have to complete another morning run.

Because DJCWA, SQJHS and LRHS are in close proximity, the re-configuration of all 3 schools should require only a few minor adjustments in the transportations service. (p. 6)

**Transportation estimates that 4 additional morning bus runs per day would cost \$9,750 per year based on a labour and meterage rate of \$50.00 per day.**

**(Source: Anita Conrad, Transportation Manager)**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

**Extra-curricular Activities**

The Grade P-1 students of Milton Centennial have enjoyed the advantages of a strong extra-curricular activity program with a high level of commitment and support from the school community. Nevertheless, there are advantages in having all Grade P-6 students from the same families attend a single school during their elementary school years, compared to having them attend 2 separate schools. The collective energy and commitment of these families can be applied more constructively when focused on one school instead of two.

Some students may have difficulty adjusting to the larger numbers of students while others will be excited by the new type of environment and the larger number of students. A reasonable period of adjustment should overcome any problems. Having the teachers of MCS present at DJCWA should be beneficial especially for the Grade 1 students from MCS in making the transition smoothly.

It is recognized that there will be a period of adjustment for the staff and students at Dr. J.C. Wickwire also. Having the younger children new to the school and the older children in Grade 6 off to SQJHS will change the environment in various ways and will surely affect the type of extra-curricular program. This is not to say that having to go through a period of adjustment and change would produce only disadvantages; the potential for benefits is just as real. For example, the younger children could benefit from having the older children as role models in the extra-curricular activities.

Generally, no problems are anticipated in regard to extra-curricular activities for the Grade 6 students at SQJHS and the Grade 9 students at LRHS. The students would simply make the move to their new school a year earlier than in the past. The Grade 6-8 and 9-12 configuration are very common and no particular concerns about participation by the younger students in extra-curricular activities are characteristic. Regarding participation in athletics, the Grade 6 students would be eligible to participate with the Grade 7 and 8 students. The interest level and enthusiasm of Grade 6 students to participate with Grade 7 and 8 students is generally recognized as a benefit to the athletic program of a middle school. The re-configuration of SQJHS would cause some changes with respect to the competitive interscholastic program. The loss of the Grade 9 students would be a disadvantage in terms of the ability of SQJHS to compete with other junior high schools, but on the other hand, they would be eligible to participate on the senior high teams at LRHS. (pp. 6-7)

**What the Impact Assessment Report fails to address are issues of programming and extra-curricular losses for students at DJCWA and SQJHS. The assessment report also does not discuss the impact of reconfiguration on Mill Village Consolidated School. The following concerns and questions must be considered:**

- **If Option A is adopted and the schools in South Queens are reconfigured as early as 2009, will Grade 6 students from Mill Village Consolidated be relocated to SQJHS as part of that move? If so, a motion to reconfigure MVCES must be made as well.**

**MVCES has not been named for review at this time. Can the school be reconfigured without going through the review process?**

**If SQJHS becomes a Grade 6-8 school in 2009, it would appear that such a move must include students from MVCES to sustain equity of opportunity for all students in the Junior High catchment area. What are the implications for MVCES, a school with a projected enrolment of 54 students next year? How would the removal of Grade 6 impact on school staffing & delivery of programs at MVCES?**

The questions surrounding MVCES are among the many reasons that the Milton SAC is urging the SSRSB to slow down the closure process and consider developing a strategic plan that includes all school communities in the South Queens region.

**Programming Considerations:**

- Grade 6 students at DJCWA receive music instruction as part of their core programming. If they move to SQJHS, they will lose the music program as well as the opportunity to participate in Christmas Concerts and Music Festival. Is the SSRSB prepared to provide a music program to students at SQJHS? If so, the cost of the program must be factored into the cost analysis of reconfiguration.
- All rooms at DJCWA are currently being used to support programming. Although the current enrolment of MCS could 'fit' into DJCWA, it would be at the expense of the Learning Centre, Sensory Room, Art Room, and Program Support. These programs and services are not 'frills', they are essential to student achievement and success.
- How would the movement of the Grade 6 students to SQJHS impact on the Intensive French program introduced at DJCWA three years ago. Would the program follow the Grade 6 students to SQJHS, or would the program be adopted at Grade 5?
- Dr. Gunn minimizes the impact of Grade 6-8 students not being able to participate in interschool athletic leagues, but states, '...they would be eligible to participate on the senior high teams at LRHS'. For many students, participation in athletics and competitive sports teams is an integral component of school life. It is highly unusual for a student entering high school to suddenly try out for a team having no experience or skills from their Junior High years. At a time when society has recognized the inactivity of our youth, childhood obesity, and the need to focus on healthy, active living, the impact on school sports must be weighed carefully.

(Impact Assessment Report...)

**Property Service Efficiencies**

The property services efficiencies in closing Milton Centennial School are obvious. The cost of operating and maintaining the facility would be eliminated. Furthermore, the inclusion of the students at DJCWA would have a minimal impact on its operating costs. Some one-time, relatively minor property services costs would be necessary because of some facility and furniture changes to accommodate smaller Grade P-1 children.

The total annual property services cost for MCS for the 2007/08 fiscal year was \$193,158.00. The cost included custodial salaries, benefits and supplies, security, electricity, heating fuel and garbage and snow removal. Also, it included a one-time, major environmental expenditure of \$82,000.00 because of an oil spill. In comparison, the total property service cost for 2006/07 was \$98,114.00. Based on these 2 years and

excluding the cost of the oil spill, a saving of approximately \$100,000. per year can be expected from the closure of MCS, excluding any major maintenance/repairs.

As reported in Appendix A, the annual maintenance for MCSS is expected to be about \$8000, on average. The \$82,000.00 in 2007/08 was not used to calculate this average and the annual figure of \$8,000.00 is included in the total property service cost of \$100,000.00.

South Queens Junior High is already scheduled for a major capital upgrade to be completed over the next few years. If 95-100 Grade 6 students were transferred in and approximately the same number of Grade 9 students were transferred out to LRHS, the impact on the facility and property service efficiencies should be negligible because the total enrolment would be unchanged.

There is a question about what facility adjustments or enhancements have to be made at Liverpool Regional High School to accommodate Grade 9. The enrolment will continue to decline. If the Grade 9 students could be accommodated with some level of inconvenience, it would only be for a year or so because of declining enrolments. (pp. 7-8)

**Misty Nauss, Principal of DJCWA, prepared a comprehensive report detailing the impact that closing MCS would have on DJCWA. This report was forwarded to Dr. Gunn as part of the information gathering preparation for the writing of the Impact Assessment Report. This information will be reported in full in Part 3, Information for Receiving Schools. It addresses the adaptations and changes that would be necessary to reconfigure the school to a P-5 facility.**

**The question of facility adjustments or enhancements required at LRHS is an important question that remains unanswered. We urge the SSRSB to pursue the matter, so both taxpayers and Board members are fully aware of any additional expenditure before a decision is made with regard to the future of our schools. We believe that our childrens' education is an invaluable commodity and that any inconvenience or unnecessary disruption to their education is unacceptable. Again, we urge the SSRSB to examine the Milton Review within the broader context of its impact on all schools in the South Queens region and the implications for all students.**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

The closure of Milton Consolidated School would result in improved efficiency in the allocation of staff positions. The smaller enrolment of MCS requires that the teaching staff allocation is greater than when the staff formula would normally provide. Because the students would be moving to a school with a much larger enrolment, some full-time-equivalent (FTE) teaching positions would be saved. For example, by applying next year's projected enrolments in the staffing formula, the total

allocation for MCS and DJCWA would be reduced by 1.25 FTE positions if all students attended DJCWA next year.

Likewise, some reductions in the following staff allocations could result: administrative assistant positions, library clerk positions and custodial positions. Given the complexity of adjusting all the staff allocations for the 4 schools involved in this closure and re-configuration, an accurate numerical analysis is not viable at this time. It is reasonable to expect that some staffing efficiencies could be found, but the total dollar value would not be significant relatively speaking. (p. 8)

**When Dr. Gunn mistakenly referred to MCS as Milton Consolidated, we wondered if perhaps he had unintentionally referred to Mill Village Consolidated School. MVCS, and not MCS has received supplemental staffing, formerly referred to as *equity status* due to its low enrolments over the years. The only requests for additional staffing at MCS have been to increase Program Support time due to an increased number of high students.**

**We agree that it is difficult to forecast an accurate numerical analysis of staffing efficiencies at this time and that the actual dollar amount would not be significant. A staff reduction of 1.25 FTE may well include the current Administrative allocation of 89% Milton currently shares a circuit Principal with Mill Village Consolidated School. If administration is deducted from this number, the teaching staff complement would remain virtually unchanged, with a possible reduction of 0.36 FTE. In other words, there is no real cost saving in terms of teaching positions resulting from reconfiguration at this time.**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

#### **Operational and Capital Requirements**

As noted in previous sections, if MCS continues to operate, the combined annual property services costs can be expected to be approximately \$100,000.00 and, given the escalating costs of salaries, electricity, fuel and materials, these costs will continue to increase annually.

More significantly, maintaining the status quo would require major capital expenditures to keep MCS operating. The figures presented in a previous section are \$150,000. over the next 2 or 3 years, minimally, or \$294,000 over a longer period.

The financial advantage of closing Milton Centennial would have to be compared against a loss of operating revenue because school boards in Nova Scotia receive a dollar amount for each square foot space used by students in schools. In this case, the SSRSB received \$78,416 for MCS for this present fiscal year. (p. 8)

**In reality, \$78,416. of the \$100,000. property services costs are paid by the province for square footage, leaving the actual cost of operating property services at MCS at \$21,584. The SSRSB loses \$78,416. if MCS is closed and DJCWA is reconfigured. No significant savings are incurred from staffing allocations and transportation costs increase to offset the need for 4 additional bus runs. By the time transportation costs are deducted, the net saving in closing MCS is approximately \$11,000.**

**The issue of major capital expenditures was dealt with earlier in this response report. The actual cost of essential facility improvements must be closely examined and factored into the equation of extending the life of the school over a five-seven year period.**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

**Impact on the Community of Milton Centennial School**

The impact on the community of Milton Centennial School would be a sense of loss and concern about the effect on the identity of the community. The sense of loss would be that of any community that sees the closure of its school as another indicator that the community is growing smaller. MCS has been very important in the lives of several generations of families over many years.

On the other hand, the sense of loss and concern may not be as severe as what would be expected under different circumstances. The loss of the school and what it has contributed to the sense of identity of the community is understood, but the students will be moving a relatively short distance, on the same buses, to the school that they would be attending eventually in Grade 2, possibly with or following their siblings. From the perspective of many of the parents, DJCWA would not be an unfamiliar setting or environment. (pp. 8-9)

**Speaking on behalf of the school community, we can state quite emphatically that the loss of Milton Centennial has little to do with an emotional attachment to a building, and everything to do with losing the quality of programming offered in a unique setting catering to this particular developmental group of students. Likewise, we believe that DJCWA does an exemplary job meeting the needs of intermediate and senior elementary students.**

**A new middle school to replace SQJHS represents a gain to the school community. Closing Milton Centennial without a plan that includes a new facility to support reconfiguration simply means that we lose a facility that enhances the educational experience of our youngest students and have gained nothing as a community. In an ideal world, we would build a wing on DJCWA and transplant the Milton learning environment to that property as a separate and distinct P-1 environment.**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

### **Community Use of School**

Various groups in the communities around MCS use the school, some on a regular basis and some on an annual basis, but there is a community hall nearby and other facilities in Liverpool are accessible. The effect of closing MCS should not have a serious negative impact on the community from the perspective of available community facilities. (p. 9)

### **Part 3 Information for Receiving Schools**

**School:** Dr. John C. Wickwire Academy (DJCWA)

**Address:** PO Box 1180, Liverpool, NS B0T 1K0

**Principal:** Ms. Misty Nauss; Vice Principal: Mr Terry Stewart

#### **Enrolment History and Projection**

The enrolment history of Dr. J.C. Wickwire Academy decreased from 523 in 2000/01 to 419 for this school year, 2007/08, a decrease of 20%. The following tables show a continuous decline at least until 2012/13.

#### **History Grades 2-6**

2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	Decrease	%
476	463	452	432	419	57	12%

#### **Projection Grades 2-6**

2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Decrease	%
399	385	371	357	343	56	14%

The enrolment history combined with the 5-year projection shows that the enrolment of Dr. J.C. Wickwire Academy will decrease from 476 in 2003/04 to 343 in 2012/13, 1 decrease of 28%, assuming the status quo in grade configuration and without including the students from MCS.

It is noteworthy for comparison purposes to see how the enrolment would be affected if the configuration of DJCWA remained as P-6. The next table shows the Grade P-6 enrolment with the MCS enrolments included.

#### **Projection: DJCWA Grade P-6 including MCS**

2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
527	505	483	461	439

It is relevant and important for this assessment that the enrolment of DJCWA in 2009/10 would be 505 if Grade 6 was not transferred to SQJHS; the enrolment was 523 in 2000/1. In 2012/13 the enrolment would be only 40 more than it is at present.

If the decision is made to transfer the Grade P-1 students from MCS to DJCWA and transfer the Grade 6 students to SQJHS, the changes could occur in September 2009, at the earliest possible date. The table below combines the Grade P-1 enrolment from MCS with the Grade 2-5 enrolment from DJCWA over the next 5 years.

**Projection for DJCWA P-5 including MCS P-1**

2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
446	409	421	380	360

The P-5 enrolment at DJCWA in 2009/10 would be 409, 10 more than the present enrolment, and it would decrease in the subsequent 3 years.

The enrolment of South Queens Junior High School has declined from 353 in 2000/01 to the present enrolment of 315, a decline of 11%. The next table provides a 5-year enrolment projection for SQJHS. According to this data, the decline will continue to be significant.

**Projection for SQJHS**

2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Decrease	%
309	299	297	260	260	49	16%

The enrolment of Liverpool Regional High School has declined from 359 in 2000/01 to the present enrolment of 335, a decline of 7%. The final table provides a 5-year projection for Liverpool Regional High School.

**Projection for LRHS**

2008/9	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	Decrease	%
345	308	315	306	296	46	13%

**School Configurations**

The configuration of DJCWA would be grade P-5. SQJHS would be Grade 6-8 and LRHS would be Grade 9-12.

**Physical Condition of Building**

Dr. J.C. Wickwire Academy is relatively new, having been constructed in 1996. The building has been maintained and requires no major capital upgrades.



**Building Use**

Gross square footage: 62, 016 sq. ft.

Teaching Space	Number	Notes
Regular classroom	23	
Gymnasium	1	
Cafeteria	1	
Library	1	
Music room	1	
Arts and craft room	1	Counted in 23 classrooms
PST room	2	Counted in 23 classrooms
Computer room	1	
Guidance room	1	Counted in 23 classrooms
Learning Centre	1	Counted in 23 classrooms
Sensory room	1	
Conference room	1	

Although the total enrolment would be less than previous enrolments when this school was in its first year of operation, the addition of grades P-1 would cause some facility use pressures in relation to how the building is used now. There would be times in a weekly schedule when the specialists might have difficulty finding a suitable space; on the other hand, there could be times when 2 classrooms would not have students in them full-time. There should be no major problems in building use that could not be easily solved.

(pp. 9-11)

**The numbers used in Dr. Gunn's report are based on inaccurate Primary enrolment projections. Recently acquired vital statistics information indicates that enrolments at Milton Centennial will be higher than first anticipated. These numbers will impact projections for all schools in the South Queens area and would heighten the pressures associated with the utilization of instructional space at DJCWA in the event that Milton closes in 2009. (Refer to p. 4)**

**Concerns Raised by Dr. J.C. Wickwire**

**The following information regarding the potential impact of the closure of MCS and reconfiguration of DJCAW to a P-5 facility was prepared by Misty Nauss, Principal of DJCWA. This report was submitted to Steve Prest, (SSRSB Central Office Staff Member assigned to the MCS Review) and further conveyed to Dr. Gunn to assist him in the preparation of his report. Unfortunately, very few of the concerns expressed by DJCWA found their way into the Impact Assessment Report. We believe that in fairness to the receiving school, their concerns should be included in this response document.**

**Facility:**

- Need to place new playground equipment at the school for the P-1 students to use. The playground equipment that we have is too large for the smaller children. **(Playground equipment from MCS cannot simply be moved as it would not meet CSA standards required for new installation).**
- We have very little space to put this new equipment. If we remove the equipment that is already here, the school does not have the money to replace it. The only place available to place smaller playground equipment is on the grassy area, inside the bus loop. This area would have to be levelled with clear stone, loam, and then pea gravel. Drainage would also have to be looked at as the area does not drain well.
- We have students in motorized wheelchairs that use this area to play because they cannot access the back playground area due to the perimeter that surrounds the equipment to contain the pea gravel. Structurally, it is not sound to remove a section of the perimeter, nor is there room to place a wheelchair ramp. Removing this area to place new, smaller equipment gives this group of students less place to play. **(Inclusion/equity?)**
- There is not enough room around the school to erect smaller equipment. The property is surrounded by bedrock and it is not feasible to try to put playground equipment on the land surrounding the school.
- The soccer field is not an appropriate place to put smaller playground equipment due to the fact that it is on bedrock and the cost would be prohibitive. To make the soccer field smaller would not allow us to play soccer games with other schools.
- Need to lower the fountains in the school to accommodate the height of the younger students. **(MCS requires few, if any, modifications despite the entry of the 4-year old cohort, due to its P-1 configuration).**
- Need to lower the coat/hat racks to accommodate the smaller children on both floors. The grade three students would move upstairs and they are too short to use the coat racks upstairs.
- OHS would be an issue when grade three students go upstairs in the winter time; they are too loaded down with snow suits, back packs, and boots to manoeuvre safely.
- Railing in the cafeteria is too high for the grade 2 students as it is. The P-1 students would have difficulty moving trays, laden with food, to the tables where they eat. Smaller tables would have to be purchased for the cafeteria to accommodate the size of the younger students. More noon supervisors would also need to be hired to assist these younger students.

### **Public School Programming:**

- The movement of the grade 6 students to the Junior High would see the grade 6 students lose their music program, choir, Christmas Concerts, and participation in the Music Festival.
- Would the movement of the grade 6 students to the Junior High result in Wickwire losing the Intensive French Program that has been established here for the past three years?
- With an influx of staff due to the Milton School closing, there could be a fracturing of specialists scheduling. . **(Unless the SSRSB is prepared to increase the staffing allocation to include specialist positions currently in place in Milton).**
- There is a huge misconception that an elementary teacher can teach any level of elementary school. Is it fair that depending on the seniority of staff, that some staff with experience at the lower levels may be required to teach upper elementary and vice versa? Having teachers in areas where they are not comfortable creates much stress and ensues that the best teaching methods are not being practised. **(Extending the timeline for the closure of MCS and developing a strategic plan for all schools affected by the closure/reconfiguration would look after HR issues through retirements).**
- We have a Learning Centre in its first year of programming; we are working through the management of this centre. The teacher will be on maternity leave for the 2008-09 year. Our belief is that this is a new program and that we would like to have it running smoothly before having an influx of new students and new curriculum.
- We have literacy and math mentors who are working through the Grade 2-6 curriculum and delivering in-servicing to the teachers at the school. Adding 2 more grades will put an even greater strain on these teachers to learn the curriculum outcomes and assist in mentoring the P-1 teachers. **(Unless the SSRSB is prepared to increase the staffing allocation to include mentoring positions currently in place in Milton).**
- Dr. John C. Wickwire will have begun our next round of Accreditation. The surveys will have been sent out, and goals set. With the loss of the grade 6 teachers and the influx of the P-1 teachers, will those goals now be appropriate? With the addition of the Milton staff to the Wickwire staff, these already pre-determined goals may make the Milton staff feel left out of the process. **(The MCS SAC recognizes the value of the Accreditation process and questions how the integrity of the project, at either school, be any less than compromised if MCS does not have an opportunity to complete its work and DJCWA establishes goals based on the needs of its current configuration and school community. A reasonable time-line and plan to allow MCS to complete the cycle and to coordinate the beginning of a new cycle at DJCWA should be incorporated into a long-term plan for the schools).**

- The integration of the two staffs will result in a loss of the less senior staff members at Wickwire. A productive staff needs to have a variety of teaching members from new to seasoned. The loss of the younger staff members at Wickwire would leave the staff in the mid to older range. Without any new staff members, this grouping may lead to a disgruntled staff, and a lot of time, money and effort will have to be put into team building. With all of the math and literacy initiatives at the provincial level, where will we, as a staff, find the time for team building? **(Extending the timeline for the closure of MCS and developing a strategic plan for all schools affected by the closure/reconfiguration would look after HR issues through retirements and would alleviate the concerns raised).**
- At present, staff at both the 2-3 level and the 4-6 levels collaborate well together. In terms of pedagogy, the 2-3 teachers focus on “Learning to Read” while the 4-6 teachers approach the curriculum from a “Reading to Learn” perspective. Separating the grades to P-2 and 3-5 will result in a lack of cohesiveness which will be detrimental to learning.
- Due to scheduling, because of the split lunch, the collaboration between the grade 2-3 teachers will not be able to take place with the ease at which it happens now.
- Numerous parents who have children at both Wickwire and Milton, like both schools, but feel that Milton is a unique situation that provides a quality, caring, and nurturing learning environment for the beginning years of a child’s education.
- There will be issues with scheduling lunch and breaks. What do we do with the grade 3 students? They are too old to be the P-2 students, but too young to be with the grade 4-5 students. Having two split lunches now allows the grade 2-3 students to interact and the grade 4-6 students to interact. This division works because they are chronologically and developmentally compatible with each other.

#### **Educational Benefits:**

- Students would have specialists in the areas of Physical Education and Music.
- Students would have access to a full service cafeteria

#### **School Configuration (Other Considerations):**

- As a result of reconfiguration, DJCWA would become a P-5 school. Grade 3 would move upstairs with grades 4 & 5. This movement would cause difficulties on several levels: a) teacher collaboration time would be reduced b) Grade 3 students may become lost in the shuffle due to being developmentally ahead of the P-2s and behind grade 4-5 students.
- Grade 6 students attending SQJHS would experience a significant change in their school day assuming that busing continues as it is now done. The school day would begin at 8:00 am and end at 2:00 pm. This may create a child care issue for some parents as 11-12 year olds will arrive home earlier and it is illegal to leave any child under the age of twelve unattended.

### **Use of Facility:**

- There are 23 rooms that can be used for classrooms.
- At present all spaces are being used for direct classroom instruction or to support programming. There are times when specialists are in our school and we have a difficult time finding a place for them to work with students.
- Depending on enrolment numbers at the time of reconfiguration (P-5 or P-6), we could have two classrooms available which do not have classes in them full-time. This would be a best case scenario which includes moving grade 6 to SQJHS. To accommodate P-1 students six classrooms are needed. This would mean the loss of two additional rooms currently used for the following: Program Support, Learning Centre, Sensory room, Guidance, French, Arts & Craft room).

**(The MCS SAC believe that moving P-1 students into DJCWA pre-maturely will be detrimental to the programming supports currently available at DJCWA and will therefore offer no additional benefits to P-1 students. Students attending MCS currently utilize a Learning Centre, Resource room and have adequate space for the Reading Recovery program to function properly. The information provided by Ms. Nauss doesn't take into account the additional requirements for Reading Recovery, no doubt due to the fact that this is a program offered in Grade 1 and Wickwire has never offered the program. It also does not take into account the additional pressures of enrolments being higher than originally projected. (Refer to p. 4)**

(Impact Assessment Report...)

### **Part 4 Conclusion**

The enrolments of all 4 schools that would be affected by the closure of Milton Consolidated School are projected to continue their significant decline. Since 2002, when the South Shore Regional School Board first approved the closure of Milton Centennial School, the enrolment decline predicted at that time has been confirmed and perhaps has proven to be even more extreme. The overall plan or option approved at that time required changes in the configurations of Dr. J.C. Wickwire Academy, South Queens Junior High School, and Liverpool Regional High School. Because of the greater certainty now regarding the enrolments, other options can be considered. (p. 11)

**Two points the SAC wishes to express:**

- 1) **The closure of Milton Centennial (not Milton Consolidated as named in the report), and any reconfiguration of SQJHS to a middle school model, impacts on the 4 schools named as well as Mill Village Consolidated School. Why has the impact on these schools not been included in the Impact Assessment along with the impact on DJCWA? The potential impact on each school must be fully examined before any decision can be made. In a small sub-system such as South Queens, every decision, whether it involves transportation or operations, has a domino affect on all schools in the area. Therefore, we urge the SSRSB to**

establish a study group to gather and analyze information regarding the reconfiguration of all schools affected. The information could then be used to develop a strategic plan for the entire area.

- 2) Enrolment numbers cited in Dr. Gunn's report are based on the existing numbers in the system. Estimates based on past trends result in a projection, but that projection is not necessarily accurate. In 2002, Milton Centennial and Mill Village surveyed the community, used information from registration forms, and used Dept. of Health data to compile a 5 year projection of Primary enrolments. Despite that information, enrolments were actually higher in each of the 5 years (2002-2007) than had been anticipated. Recent information, included in this report indicates that enrolments will be higher than those estimated by Dr. Gunn. (Refer to p. 4)

(Impact Assessment Report...)

Option A: As originally intended and approved in 2002, close MCS, and reconfigure DJCWA as a Grade P-6 school, SQJHS as Grade 6-8 and LRHS as Grade 9-12.

It is our opinion that Option A should be rejected due to the fact that it was dependent on the capital renovation project at SQJHS (refer to paragraph 2 following the list of Options) and a full impact study of receiving schools has not been initiated. We assume that Dr. Gunn's report contains an error with regard to Option A in so far as it proposes that both DJCWA and SQJHS house grade 6 students. We further surmise that Dr. Gunn intended that this option be enacted in September 2009, although a date was not specified.

Option B: Because the reconfigured enrolment of DJCWA, by 2009/10, would be less than its enrolment in 2000/01 (prior enrolments were even larger), close MCS and reconfigure DJCWA as a Grade P-6 school, with no change to SQJHS and LRHS.

The financial gain resulting from Option B in terms of operations, transportation, funding per square foot, and human resources, is not significant enough to merit an immediate closure of MCS leading to the loss of space used to support programming at DJCWA. Nor do we support the concept of creating a P-6 school until plans are made to move the grade 6 students to SQJHS. There is no educational benefit to doing so and, as the Wickwire response indicates, there are a number of concerns that need to be addressed before DJCWA is prepared to become a P-5 facility. Such a plan also jeopardizes the integrity of the Accreditation Project at both schools. We firmly believe this to be a rash Option that would lack the forethought and planning necessary to facilitate a smooth transition.

Option C: Because the total enrolments of all schools are declining, close MCS; reconfigure DJCWA as a Grade P-5 school and SQJHS as a Grade 6-9 school, with no change to LRHS. This option is more dependent on the capital renovations being completed at SQJHS before any changes are made.

**Once again, the implications of this proposal have not been examined with regard to the potential impact of a 6-9 configuration at SQJHS. Option C is also contingent upon the completion of capital renovations at SQJHS, a point that became redundant once the SSRSB changed the request for capital renovations to a request for a new capital construction project.**

The overall conclusion is that Milton Consolidated School should be closed under Option A, B, C and, furthermore, these 3 options need to be thoroughly considered over the next 12 months through a school review process. Not only do the options need to be examined, but also, the timing to make changes needs to be determined, whether 2009 or 2010.

There is uncertainty about when the capital renovations at SQJHS will be completed and about how many classrooms need to be added at LRHS. Option B could be implemented in September 2009 because SQJHS and LRHS would not be affected. The timing of Option A and C would depend on the completion date for the renovations.

It is important for all the schools and communities named in this report to have these questions answered as soon as possible. The answers can only be finalized if the formal review process takes place right away. (pp. 11-12)

Conclusion of Response:

We agree that declining enrolments are a cause of great concern to all rural areas of the province. We further concede that enrolment issues will eventually result in school closures and the reconfiguration of schools. In view of our response to the various sections of the Impact Assessment Report, we conclude that any immediate closure of MCS would result in considerable turmoil and would be detrimental to the education of students in South Queens. We are urging the SSRSB to consider the following alternative option:

The SSRSB will establish a Study Committee with the specific mandate of examining the detailed impact of closing Milton Centennial School on all schools in the South Queens area. Based on the findings of this Committee, a Strategic Planning Committee shall be struck to develop a plan with a reasonable timeline that will result in the closure of MCS, the reconfiguration of DJCWA to a P-5 school, the creation of a new Middle School (Grades 6-8) to replace SQJHS, and will recommend appropriate changes to LRHS to enable the school to meet the educational needs of a Grade 9-12 population.

The composition of both committees will offer representation from school administration, staff, parents, community members, members of the SSRSB, and Central Office staff. Any work groups arising from the committee shall ensure equal representation of each of these partners.

We look forward to having an opportunity to discuss this option with you in a public forum.

*Col Brown*      *Tim Wood*      *Loren Steph*  
*Tracey Duffrey*      *Paul Humeau*  
*Abraham Kaddell*      *Margaret Leaman*      *R Williams*  
*Belinda McDougall*      *Diane Wentzell*

School Advisory Council  
Milton Centennial Elementary School