

*Gold River-Western Shore Elementary
School*

Study Committee Response Report

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Respectfully submitted

by

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Students are our Treasure

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Introduction

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is a dynamic, positive learning environment for students, staff, families and community members. It is situated on a beautiful parcel of land that faces the Atlantic Ocean. Local families and tourists travelling 'The Lighthouse Route' visit, especially during the summer months, to enjoy the 'Pirate Ship' in the front of the school and the wonderful recreational playground behind the school. GRWSES is not far from Oak Island made famous all over the world through stories about pirates and hidden treasure. Our school serves children from the surrounding communities of Martin's River, Martin's Point, Western Shore, Gold River, Beech Hill (Acadia First Nation Community), and Chester Basin. We are very proud to fly both the Canadian and Mi'kmaq flags at our school. Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is the "center and heart" of these communities.

Criterion 1.3: Availability of optional programs

Option	Key findings
Status quo	<p>No optional programs are offered in elementary schools, other than French Immersion which is not offered at GRWSES.</p> <p>Although it is not an optional program offered at the school, a special program should be noted because it is strongly supported by the school and its benefits are evident at the school. About 10 Acadia First Nations students from the Gold River Band Reserve attend GRWSES during the day and then an after-school program in the Gold River Health Centre on the Reserve, just a few minutes away. Their school bus drops them off after school at the Health Centre.</p> <p>This after-school program, provided by the Acadia First Nation, has been actively supported by the Principal and staff of GRWSES since it began. A</p>

	<p>very constructive working relationship between those responsible for the after-school program and the staff of the school has been established and evidence of the program's success is growing year-by-year.</p>
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	<p>No optional programs are offered in elementary schools, other than French Immersion which is not offered at CDS.</p> <p>In terms of educational benefits for the Acadia First Nations students, it would be very important that the support continue at CDS for the after-school program on the Gold-River Band Reserve.</p>

As per the Impact Assessment Report, Gold River-Western Shore Elementary offers an after-school program provided by Acadia First Nation for students who identify as such. Currently, there is 16 % of the student population at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary who have identified themselves as Acadia First Nation. At Chester District Elementary there is currently 3% of their student population who self-identify as such.

This particular program is a partnership which was formed in 2008 between Gold River-Western Shore Elementary and Acadia First Nation Gold River Band Reserve. The nature of the program

is to provide a safe place for the Acadia First Nation's students to complete homework, learn more about their culture and interact with peers of their descent, all while building self-esteem, self-confidence and self-awareness within their culture.

This program operates out of the Health Centre located on the Gold River Reserve ideally located minutes away from Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School. The bus drops them off so they can attend the Acadia First Nation after-school program. If students were to attend Chester District Elementary School, there would be an increase in bussing time which would interfere with the student's drop off time at the Acadia First Nation program, resulting in missed cultural opportunities.

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is in close proximity to the Acadia First Nations Centre which easily allows relocation of the program to the school when necessary. It has not been an issue to accommodate these changes on short notice. If children were attending Chester District Elementary School, the distance to pick up a student may be a challenge for parents for various reasons: time constraints/schedules, extra funds required that may not be available for gas, and parents who do not have a vehicle. They may not be able to arrange alternate necessary transportation to travel the extra distance.

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School is very fortunate to have such a successful working relationship with the Acadia First Nation Community and welcomes the Acadia First Nation into the school to showcase their culture and share their heritage with the school as a whole. For examples, the grade 1 students were learning Mi'kmaq vocabulary and there have been drumming sessions held during assemblies for the whole school.

Acadia First Nation's students at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School feel safe and secure enough to self-identify in this close knit school. Would they continue to self-identify in a school with three times the student population? Would they potentially sacrifice their culture and heritage at school due to feeling ill-at-ease leading to assimilation? At Gold River-Western Shore Elementary the Acadia First Nation's students feel connected, they are engaged, have a sense of belonging and a sense of pride in who they are. If students of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary attended Chester District Elementary School, how would the Acadia First Nation's students be supported to the same extent as they are here? How would support be maintained? How would the relationships be established between Chester District Elementary School and the Acadia First Nation?

Andrew Francis, Acadia First Nation Chief and Council for the Gold River Reserve, states succinctly, "The Acadia First Nation and Council Chief would like to put forth their support for the Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School. Over the past five years a partnership has been formed between the school and our Mi'kmaq community. The aboriginal after school program and an accessible student aid worker have positively affected the way our youth view their education." He further states, "Mi'kmaq cultural awareness is a priority for this school and its principal. The continued support allows our children to understand their own culture while providing the rest of the community with knowledge of our history. The loss of the school and our partnership would be very disheartening." (Due to the present need, there are two student support workers working with students at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School.)

Criterion 1.4: Availability of specialist services

Option	Key findings
Status quo	The specialist services of a part-time resource teacher guidance counsellor and the various specialist services from regional office are available at GRWSES. Because the allocations for resource, guidance and each specialist service at the school are 60% or less, either one teacher must provide all the services or two or more teachers must provide a specialist service and carry some regular classroom duties. Although, no particular problem exists presently, it has been necessary in recent years, to increase the resource allocation to full-time to be able to respond to the special needs of an individual student.
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	The resource teacher allocation in CDS would be 1.77, so there would be one full-time position and a 77% position. The guidance counsellor position would be a 60% position and the behavior support position would be 40%, thus these two allocations could be combined to create a full-time position.

In regards to resources for students, parents of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary have fears that their child(ren) may not receive appropriate/adequate resources at another school. It was stated by Dr. Jim Gunn at the family meeting held at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School that resources are allocated by need and all students would be supported at Chester District Elementary School. While this is the case, resource planning for Gold River-Western Shore Elementary students by Chester District Elementary administration will be challenging. Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is *of* the community; therefore each staff member knows the families and their backgrounds, making resource planning more effective. There is plenty of research showing the critical role that socioeconomic status plays in the educational development of children. Resource planning without this crucial component can be less than effective and have costly repercussions. The staff at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary knows their students as individuals and are familiar with family backgrounds. This allows for provisions for individual needs and better cooperation from parents to resolve possible issues.

Failure to plan resource adequately for Gold River-Western Shore Elementary students may mean an increase in anxiety, behavior or adjustment problems. Currently, the staff at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is aware of the needs of *all* students and work hard to provide adequate and alternate resources. For example, a primary teacher is able and willing to provide additional behavior support for a grade 4 student. The staff at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is able to focus on the student needs and not solely on the academics. For example, the principal is able to identify at 8 am if a particular child is in need of 15 minutes of 1:1 time before starting their day in the classroom or if a particular student needs to kick a ball before returning to class, or if another student needs to have 1:1 time to be motivated or rewarded for their effort with a game. In another example, one teacher took it upon herself to access two bicycles for two grade 5 students and used her lunch hours to teach those two students how to ride a bike so they could participate in bike club. This is another example of all staff at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary knowing all students and being flexible to meet individual needs and circumstances. There is a strong sense of cohesiveness among teachers, administration and support staff. At Gold River-Western Shore Elementary, teachers and staff have the ability to adapt programs and practices to enhance the learning of each student. There is opportunity to have more frequent interactions between administration, students and teachers.

**Criterion 3.1: Reduction or increase in short-term capital maintenance costs
(This refers to spending required to keep an option alive until another is available)**

Option	Key findings
Status quo	<p>An increase short-term capital costs is required to keep the school operating safely and effectively. An investment of approximately \$50,000-\$200,000 will have to be made to bring accessibility up to code. The approximate range is wide to reflect the array of choices available for individual items.</p> <p>These costs include \$50,000 for chair life access to the 2nd level or up to \$200,000 for an external elevator.</p>
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	<p>The cost to upgrade accessibility at GRWSES (\$50,000-\$200,000) would not have to be incurred in this case as CDS is an accessible school. However, CDS will have to install an automatic door opener for the front entrance at a cost of approximately \$3,000 to be fully accessible.</p>

It should be noted that the Impact Assessment Report identified accessibility as an issue at Gold River-Western Shore. Currently, the Library has been moved to the main floor so it can be accessed by all of the students, therefore eliminating a cost up to \$200,000 to install an elevator. The only services now located on the second floor are Guidance and Speech & Language Pathology. Arrangements would be made to see students on the first floor if accessibility was an issue for them. Therefore, there is no part of the school that a student with mobility limitations would have trouble accessing. Perhaps the upstairs could be re-identified to be used for storage, offices or a community room for groups. The Provincial Government provides funding to groups for innovative ideas regarding community usage of schools.

Washrooms are also accessible and automatic door openers have been installed on the front doors of the school. Programs, such as Parent and Tot Group for children 0-6 years old which is provided by South Shore Family Resource Association, and Kidz Zone provided by Chester & Area Family Resource Centre can and do operate throughout the building with full accessibility.

At a recent public meeting it was shared by Mr. Robert Barton (Deilotte), "other schools have

more pressing issues” in discussing the needs of an elevator at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary and a full study of how much this installation would cost would not be completed prior to the decision for Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School.

**Criterion 3.1: Reduction or increase in short-term capital maintenance costs
(This refers to spending required to keep an option alive until another is available)**

Option	Key findings
Status quo	<p>An increase short-term capital costs is required to keep the school operating safely and effectively. An investment of approximately \$50,000-\$200,000 will have to be made to bring accessibility up to code. The approximate range is wide to reflect the array of choices available for individual items.</p> <p>These costs include \$50,000 for chair life access to the 2nd level or up to \$200,000 for an external elevator.</p>
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	<p>The cost to upgrade accessibility at GRWSES (\$50,000-\$200,000) would not have to be incurred in this case as CDS is an accessible school. However, CDS will have to install an automatic door opener for the front entrance at a cost of approximately \$3,000 to be fully accessible.</p>

Criterion 3.2: Reduction or increase in long-term capital renovation or construction costs

Option	Key findings
Status quo	<p>A substantial investment in the property will be needed to keep GRWSES open long term. Estimates were obtained for major structures or systems likely to reach end of their life (roof), or need upgrade (electrical system), in the longer term. (A list of possible requirements appears in Appendix G.) The SSRSB's preliminary estimate of long-term costs at GRWSES is approximately \$1.5M.</p>
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	<p>Closing GRWSES would avoid the substantial long-term costs required to continue to meet regulation and code.</p>

The South Shore Regional School Board has invested significant resources to complete the identification reports and assessments on the current schools up for review. These funds could have been used towards the operational/capital expenditures on schools in the South Shore Regional School Board.

According to the Impact Assessment Report not all classrooms at Chester District Elementary School are currently in use. If Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School were to attend Chester District Elementary School, there would be some increase in operational costs such as utilities, supplies and materials needed for these classrooms, etc. Also, increased usage means

increased repair or replacement of items such as supplies, the well, the septic system and the cafeteria.

Over the past several years, many upgrades have occurred at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School. For instance, solar panels on the roof to heat the hot water, new siding and windows, new boilers in the basement awaiting installation, washroom renovations, etc.

Mr. Wellsley Eisnor, recently retired from Operations at the South Shore Regional School Board, presented to Steve Prest, Director of Operations, an estimated \$400 000 for capital costs. He states that the 1.5 million cost in the Impact Assessment Report is greatly inflated. Please review the figures provided by Mr. Eisnor (See Appendix A). In addition, Mr. Eisnor questioned the need for the sprinkler system. For instance, Chester Area Middle School, and New Ross do not have a sprinkler system in place and they are larger schools.

Many parents and community members who access the school feel that if Gold River-Western Shore closes the financial resources that have been spent on our school over the past number of years could be seen as wasteful and a huge loss.

If Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School closes, the school will become the responsibility of the Municipality of the District of Chester; therefore, it will continue to be a cost to us, the taxpayers.

One of the areas identified in the Deloitte report focused on technology upgrade. This is an issue continuously faced by all schools. At the public meeting a substitute teacher identified

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School as a school with technology that exceeds other schools. She states, "I have never seen so much in one school.....that says something!"

New Playgrounds at GRWSES

Phase I

During the years 2004-2005, the South Shore Regional School Board were assessing their playgrounds and removing equipment that no longer met CSA standards. As a result, Gold River-Western Shore Elementary had most of their existing equipment removed. Fortunately, with some funding from the Department of Education and support from the South Shore Regional School Board, the school received sufficient money to complete Phase I of the playground upgrade in front of the school. This included a 'Pirate Ship' theme that was completed in June of 2007. The total cost of this project was approximately \$69,000. With the school bordering the ocean and within a short distance from the famous Oak Island with its mystery of hidden treasure, it is a magnificent location. The front playground has been enjoyed by our students, members of the surrounding communities, as well as visitors from afar. Since 2007 our yearly group photo has been taken with our students and staff aboard and/or surrounding the pirate ship!

Phase II

In 2008 Gold River-Western Shore Elementary began the process of upgrading its playground located at the back of the school. The playground design was selected to include a wide variety of equipment that would promote physical fitness and participation that would not only benefit our students but also the surrounding communities. The design placed an emphasis on accessibility for all ages and included surfacing that would allow wheelchair access for people with disabilities. The cost of Phase II was approximately \$143,000 which included landscaping, reshaping the soccer field, new equipment and a multi-purpose court. A major amount of funding was provided by the School Board, along with Provincial Government Grants, a \$30,000 Grant from the Municipality of the District of Chester, and School Funds raised by various fundraising projects.

We treasure our volunteers who helped make the playground a reality. To name only a few, Mahone Bay Area Lions Club, Chester Basin, New Ross, Chester Lions Club, Travis Parsons who donated 'fire wood' several times for Ticket Raffles, the Western Shore & District Volunteer Fire Department, and volunteers from the community who spent long hours creating this wonderful recreational facility.

Official Opening of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School's new Playground (2nd Phase) was held on May 28, 2010.

If the school were to close, moving the equipment from the front and back playgrounds would be a monumental undertaking. Not only would the costs be astronomical, the safety concerns with re-installing the equipment at another site may most likely prove to be prohibitive.

According to Steve Prest, Director of Operations, South Shore Regional School Board, it would cost \$30,000 to move the equipment, exclusive of dismantling costs and the site prep at a new location and the re-installation.

Also of importance in the Impact Assessment Report, 6.7 Appendix G: Capital Expenditure Data, it states that items completed in the last 5 -10 years amounted to \$290, 000. Listed as \$75, 000 for "Time Clock for School Bells" was actually only about \$450 thus reducing the total expenditures to \$215,450.

Criterion 5.2: Teacher turnover

Teacher turnover can be measured by the number of teachers who transfer to another school, are on pregnancy or other leave, and by the number of retirees. These in turn account for the number of probationary or 100% term contract positions on staff in any particular year.

Option	Key findings
<p>Status quo</p>	<p>Teacher turnover has been a matter of concern because term contract positions have been filled by different individuals and some probationary contract teachers had to be declared surplus, thus being forced to transfer.</p> <p>During the past 5 years, 3 teachers transferred from GRWSES and, for a various reasons, in 3 of the 5 years, there were 2 probationary contract positions in each year.</p> <p>Also, for GRWSES, there have been 7 different principals in the past 7 years, for various reasons.</p> <p>During the past 5 years, 3 teachers transferred from CDS. For various reasons, in 4 of the 5 years, there was 1 probationary contract position each year and, in 2 of those years, there was one 100% term contract position.</p> <p>For each of these schools, the number of new teachers is significant relative to the total number of teachers on staff.</p>
<p>Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)</p>	<p>Typically, smaller schools have a higher percentage of new or inexperienced teachers than larger schools, relative to the total number on staff, but this is not the case in the schools being considered here. There is no reason to believe that teacher turnover will be a problem, given that it is not a problem now at CDS and the school's enrolment will be made larger under this option.</p>

In the report, it states “Teacher turnover had been a matter of concern because term contract positions have been filled by different individuals and some probationary contract teachers had to be declared surplus, thus being forced to transfer.”

If Gold River School has a high turn over of term contract teachers and surplus teachers (in excess to that required by a school), it is due to the fact that the hiring process is not solely up to the principal. The principal is unable to simply hire the teacher who was in the position the year before. In order to have a fair hiring system, the School Board has a hiring policy that is

based on both seniority and experience. The principal’s role is to be on an interview team and interview the candidates that get short-listed for the position.

While this may be an area of concern, it is one shared in other schools and is a result of hiring practices of the South Shore Regional School Board and thus is not something that can be controlled by our school and in no way should it reflect upon our school.

Dates	Principal
2000-2008 (Feb.)	Katherine MacPherson (Permanent)
2008 (Feb.)- 2009	Tom Thomson (Permanent)
2009-2010	Carol Hipwell (Term)
2010-2011	Tom Thomson (Permanent)
2011-2012	Bernie Van Doninck (Term)
2012-2013	Melissa Willman (Permanent)

Principal turnover has been the result of changes in life circumstances of the serving administrators and has little to do with Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School.

It is noticeable within the school that the teachers and administration step up to the plate and cover what needs to get done. In the report Dr. Gunn addresses the concern that this may have

a negative impact on the staff, i.e.: burn out, as there are fewer staff in a smaller school vs. a larger school that can spread the demands further across the staff. Diffusion of responsibility typically occurs in a larger school with more staff. This is when staff may be unwilling to take on additional responsibilities because they feel that someone else will do it. There may be an increased risk that responsibilities would not be taken on in a larger school vs. a smaller school.

Criterion 6.1: Increase or decrease in time/distance on bus for students

Option	Key findings
Status quo	N/A
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	<p>This option would add 120 total square kms to CDS's current catchment area and impact student transportation by 15 minutes. Some students will see an increase in onboard travel time. This is expected to be a maximum of 15 minutes for any individual student and thus all routes will be less than one hour in total transport time and thus in line with SSRSB Policy 215.</p> <p>Currently students from this area are transported to CAMS when they reach grade 6, which is on the same campus as CDS, and similar journeys are being made within the SSRSB transportation routing system at present.</p>

One of our concerns is the estimate of additional bussing time. The Transportation Department of the South Shore Regional School Board estimates that an additional 15 minutes of time is required to transport students to Chester. It takes 20 minutes to travel from Martin’s River Bridge to Chester District Elementary School by car traveling the speed limit; this does not include stops along the route to pick up children. Currently pick up in the morning begins at 7:05 am for some students; this would mean they could potentially be waiting for the bus at 6:50am. A four year old starting their school day at 6:50 am and possibly not returning home until 2:25 or until at the latest 6pm (if attending after school child care), making for an exceptionally long and demanding day. Such an early start poses a safety risk to a small child waiting on side of the road on a dark winter morning on pre-dawn slippery road conditions. Policy 310 of the Transportation Department of SSRSB specifies that students are not to be picked up at bus stops prior to 7 am. When secondary road closures come into effect, some of the children may need to travel over 10KM to get to the pick up spot; this will add an increase

in time to their school day. What will happen to these particular students if they are required to attend Chester District Elementary School and parents cannot get them there due to lack of finances or inability to meet time constraints with work schedules? There will be the students unable to function at their best throughout the day, imposing challenges to their learning.

Prior to any decision to close Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School, a detailed analysis of student transportation must be undertaken by the South Shore Regional School Board

Transportation Department. Conspicuous issues for analysis include:

- An accurate measurement of the time to transport children, especially from the western most boundaries of the current catchment area.
- Any additional equipment necessary to transport elementary age children separated from middle and/or high school children.
- Cost/savings implications with respect to additional distance, particularly as they are affected by fuel and driver wages.
- Conformity to the South Shore Regional School Board policy on student transportation (Policy 310 in particular)

Less conspicuous but of enormous importance is parent transportation as it is hindered, complicated or made more burdensome through increased distance. Hardest hit in this respect are families dealing with poverty. If a child falls ill, if appointments are scheduled necessitating school pick up, etc., and parents have no transportation, or few resources to buy fuel, they become even more marginalized.

Criterion 6.2: Increase or decrease in time/distance for families to attend school activities

Option	Key findings
Status quo	N/A
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	There will be an increase for some families to attend school activities at CDS. Given the maximum additional transit time for students under this option is 15 minutes by bus, it is expected that families with cars will experience smaller increases, due to the fact that the school bus must make stops, which is an increase in travel time that will not affect direct travel via car. Families without the use of a car may have difficult attending school events under this scenario.

The Chester & Area Family Resource Centre presently has an after-school childcare program at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary which has operated since September 2002. It presently services twenty families. Three of the families have their children registered on a full-time basis, which is Monday to Friday. The remaining families change the days that they need childcare on a weekly basis. If the students were to move to Chester District Elementary School, there is only room for the three full time participants at the Resource Centre in Chester. There is not enough room for the part-time children on a consistent basis. These families have to wait to see if there is enough room on a particular day. Only the full-time children have guaranteed spots. Chester does not have another daycare that provides afterschool care to the community.

As mentioned in other areas, transportation is an issue for some of the families at our school. If the children were to move to Chester District and be fortunate enough to obtain a spot at the Resource Centre, it will be difficult for some parents to get to Chester before the six o'clock closing time if they work far from the Centre. Other families may not own a car and not be able to pick up their children from Chester. At Gold River, many of the families are within walking distance to the school and can pick up their children on foot.

In addition to potential elevated costs for travel and participation in activities, there would be less opportunity to participate in activities. For example, there are 15 players on a soccer team. Potentially over 300 students, if we amalgamate, will have to fight for those 15 spots versus if Gold River-Western Shore Elementary remains status quo, there are 15 spots with 100 students. Students at Gold River would also show greater participation levels in extracurricular activities at Gold River compared to Chester District Elementary as they already know their peers, alleviating performance anxiety.

The strong team of parent and community member volunteers who provide countless hours on programs daily in the school, such as breakfast program, lunch program, Turkey dinner at Christmas time, and fluoride treatment program, to name a few. These volunteers are able to attend due to the fact that the school is in their community. If they had to travel an additional 30 minutes (15 each way) to volunteer, they simply may not make it work from a scheduling stand point, eliminating an opportunity for many parents to play an active role in their child's school. The students at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary have come to know and trust these volunteers as they are familiar faces on an almost daily basis for many. Students of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary would feel at a loss and disconnected as there would potentially be fewer, if any, familiar faces for them at Chester District Elementary School.

Christmas Concert

Should Gold River close, the population density of both parents and students and the capacity of Chester District Elementary School gym necessitate the holding of four concert events over two days. This causes undue hardship particularly for low-income families.

The following information applies when there is a large event. It is from Derwin Swinemar, Deputy Fire Marshall Lunenburg and Queens Counties.

- Chairs must be tied in all public buildings with over 200 people in attendance.
- Basically the capacity number is taken by multiplying the room size divided by 10. For example: 2,000 sq ft. divided by 10=200 people.
- At a school event, all children who are in the room where the event is taking place are part of the 200. (For example, the Fire Hall capacity is 240 people but 60 children who were seated on the sidelines, had to be included. Therefore, only 180 people could come to each concert performance.)
- If a Finale is held at the end of the Concert, all participants have to be counted as part of the total capacity allowed.
- No more than 15 chairs can be placed in a row. There has to be 16" between each row of chairs (the aisle)

If we were to add our students to the present students at Chester District, we would need to have two full days of concerts. We could not fit all of the parents in one evening showing of the concert. This would create a great deal of extra work for the music teacher to ensure that the children are able to perform on both nights. As mentioned in many areas of this report, transportation is an issue for some of the parents at the school. If there were two nights of Christmas concerts, they would have to drive their children to Chester two nights in a row and only be able to see the concert on one night. This will be very difficult for some of our families who do not have adequate transportation and who are working parents.

Criterion 7.1: Availability of a suitable number and range of extra-curricular activities

Option	Key findings
Status quo	There is no problem or concern whatsoever about the availability of a suitable number and range of extra-curricular activities in GRSWES or CDS. The input from the principal and SAC representatives of each school was very positive. Recreational programs run through the school serve the needs of children whose families otherwise may have to pay for sports and other activities. We were told these activities include: soccer, basketball, healthy girls league, ukulele group and choir.
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	Having a larger number of staff members and families, with a broader school community, should enhance or extend what is already offered at CDS. SAC members told us that they were concerned about the loss of programs that the school offered for free, that may need to be paid for once the students attend CDS. Soccer and basketball were specifically mentioned.

Criterion 7.2: Accessibility to activities for a reasonable majority of students and families

Option	Key findings
Status quo	Accessibility to activities is related directly to the distances that students and families must travel to the school. Relative to some geographical or school catchment areas in the SSRSB and other areas of Nova Scotia, the catchment areas of GRWSES and CDS are not excessively large and the families in each are most likely accustomed to the distances they must travel.
Close school (Transfer all students to CDS)	Because the expanded school catchment area would be much larger, the impact on some families of GRWSES, and perhaps the majority, would be one of disadvantage or inconvenience, compared to the status quo; they would have to travel a greater distance to access the extra-curricular activities at CDS. Some GRWSES families could have less distance to travel because their home is closer to CDS than to GRWSES.

As per the Impact Assessment Report, “If Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School closes, the community will lose not only the programs, but also the sense of community established to support the local elementary school”. It also states, “The closure of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School would have a negative effect on the local community”. Gold River-Western Shore Elementary has had and/or continues to offer programs such as: Walk to School/Walk to Breakfast, Parent and Tot Group through South Shore Family Resource Association

partnerships, Chester Art Centre After-School Art Program, EnPointe Studio provides an after-school tumbling program, Chester & Area Family Resource Centre provides Kidz Zone (after-school child care), Acadia First Nation's after school program, pre-primary programming (see Appendix C), in-house sports leagues, bike club (with easy access to utilize the trail behind the school), reading club, Camp Mush-a-Mush, Train trip to Truro, field trips, pool party for the whole school at Atlantica Hotel, DARE, Terry Fox, writing club and Schools Plus after-school funded program, in which 40% of the students participated. The ability to create programming and partnerships at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is phenomenal.

A huge concern for parents of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is the increase in travel to school activities if students transfer to Chester District Elementary School. This presents a problem for those who do not have transportation and/or may have socioeconomic challenges. They may not be able to allot extra funds for travel to Chester to pick up their child (ren). These students may potentially miss out or need to surrender a favorite activity. For some students, these activities provide a needed outlet and/or positive and safe environment. If students were transferred to Chester District, according to 7.1 of the Impact Assessment Report, students may possibly need to pay for activities at Chester District. The children of families who cannot afford to pay could be excluded. Currently Gold River-Western Shore Elementary students do not pay for in-house activities as they are fully funded by fundraising and all students participate regardless of financial situations.

Parents voiced concerns at the meetings held. For example, we have students participating in bike club that presently bike to school those days as that is the sole means of transporting their

bike here. They would not be able to attend the same activity in Chester as they would have no option for getting their bike there.

Another parent voiced that her child attends grade 6 at Chester Area Middle School but lives in the Western Shore community and has no transportation. They depend fully on others to get their family to necessary activities/meetings at the school. This parent commented that her child doesn't go to many after-school activities due to this challenge. She said, "She is missing out on a lot going on over there." The same parent also stated, "You are taking a valuable thing from our community."

The working parents, who have children attending the after school activities at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School, find it greatly convenient for their children to attend the Kidz Zone after-school child care program at the school as it is all self-contained at the school. There is no need for children to be transported elsewhere when the activity is over to get to their childcare provider.

Enrolment

One of the factors leading to a review of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School is enrolment. Since there are schools with smaller enrolments, this should be a minor factor in determining closure. There is no accurate way to forecast enrolment. There is every possibility of an influx of children and families into the area with the likelihood of the twinning of highway 103 through to Yarmouth and the contract with the ship building in Halifax. Tim Harris, a local real estate broker, stated: "...While the 'numbers' show the enrolment is down, this is a temporary thing for this area. As a Real Estate Broker, I see the Gold River-Western Shore [area] beginning to repopulate with new young home owners ready to start a family and existing small families. We are making more sales in this area every day. The homes are affordable...I believe the diminishing enrolment predictions going forward to 2016 are wrong...Don't forsake the 'long term' benefit for 'short term' gain. Once you make this devastating mistake, we will lose a jewel within our school system. A jewel that should be studied and modeled around Nova Scotia as a perfect combination of student, teacher and volunteer involvement, making the whole of this school greater than the parts."

Special Programs at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School

- **Camp Mush-A-Mush**

The Outdoor Education Camp has been held for students from Grades 3 and 4 of Gold River Western Shore Elementary every second year since 1996 for a total of eight times. A three-day, two-night experience is held at Lake Mush-A-Mush scheduled usually in mid-June. Most areas of the curriculum are covered with the themes being nature appreciation and wilderness survival. Guest presenters teach the children through hands-on experiences such as canoeing and water safety, nature crafts, plant and animal identification, first-aid, survival, etc. This is a unique, unforgettable opportunity for the students to learn about and appreciate the environment around them, an experience that could never be duplicated in the classroom.

Children are assigned to a base cabin with an adult in charge. Cabins house from 5-10 students each and there is a chaperone in charge of each cabin. The boys' cabins are in a section of the camp separated from the girls. On the average approximately 39 students attend, two teachers and a minimum of 12 parent volunteers. There is always someone present that is trained in First-Aid and CPR. All of the parent volunteers have been approved through the R.C.M.P Criminal Records Check and Child Abuse Registry.

Students are divided into teams that move through a series of centres throughout the three days. Centres include: individuals from Department of Lands and Forest who take pond samples and identify them through microscopes; canoeing instruction; Search and Rescue (with tracking dog) direct a "lost in the woods" program; native craft and culture by April Hiltz; and wilderness

first aid by a trained St. John's Ambulance instructor. In addition to these centres, the children will have swimming supervised by a qualified lifeguard, and crafts and sports facilitated by teachers or parents. On the first evening there are organized outdoor games and activities; and on the second evening there are songs and skits. The cooking is done by parents.

The three-day Camp Mush-A-Mush trip is very well received by both the parents and students.

For many of the students, this is the only 'camp' they will ever experience.

- **Train Trip**

Every second year the Grade 3 and 4 classes experience a train trip. It begins with them departing from Gold River-Western Shore Elementary early in the morning by bus. Their first destination is Shubenacadie Wildlife Park. There they eat lunch and then travel on to Truro. If time permits, they visit Victoria Park for a walkabout tour. Everyone boards the train in Truro and travels back to Halifax. The school covers all costs of the day's outing.

This train trip and the Camp Mush-A-Mush experience are two traditions at Gold-River Western Shore Elementary. In addition to the yearly class trips, lower grades look forward to knowing that their turn will come to participate in these two very special events.

- **Indigo Love of Reading Grant and Library Information**

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School has also been the proud recipient of the Indigo Grant which provided \$35,000 over 3 years to purchase new books for the library. This grant also provided each student with a new book they chose themselves at Chapters in Bayer's Lake as part of a field trip for the entire school.

Information provided from Kim Armstrong (present Library Technician)

"... Over the last five years our library collection has become a very important resource for literacy and educational research for our students and staff at Gold River Elementary. I also purchased, eight Kobo Vox (e-readers) with some of the grant money, to bring technology into the library. We have some very enthusiastic readers now at Gold River School!

The library didn't have a cataloguing database, so last year I volunteered to bring the library up to date and began to catalogue the books into an automated system (Readerware program) on the computer. Once completed, the students and staff will be able to locate resources more efficiently.

We also received a \$400.00 grant this year for literacy; we started an after-school fun with reading program. I have twenty-one students enrolled in this after-school program. The students in this program are also having fun using the e-readers.

At Gold River Elementary we also celebrate **Literacy Day** each year. This is a chance for parents in the community to come into the school and enjoy the love of reading with students and staff."

- **Fluoride Mouth Rinse Program**

Under the direction of Lynn Myra, Dental Hygienist, Public Health Services, parent volunteers have assisted with the Fluoride Rinse Program that has been offered at Gold River-Western Shore for the past fifteen years. Studies have shown that children who rinse with fluoride once a week in this program can expect to have fewer cavities. This program is not offered at all schools; therefore, Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School is very fortunate to provide this benefit for our students.

- **Breakfast & Lunch Programs**

Parent Volunteers operate our Breakfast Program five days per week. Students do not have to pre-register for this program. Approximately 67% of the children are served from the early morning breakfast cart filled with a selection of juice, nutritious fruit, vegetables, and healthy snacks. The volunteers several times throughout the year serve a hot breakfast. The program receives financial support from grants and community organization(s).

- Volunteers also assist with our Hot Lunch Program offered to students five days per week. The Menu choices alternate every other week. Prices are set to cover expenses with a low profit margin. Volunteers make lunches on site two days per week, while meals are supplied by local businesses the remaining three days. On the average 35%-40% of our students order regularly from our Lunch Program.

- **Recycling**

Since the beginning of recycling in the Municipality of Chester, Gold River has been very active in educating both staff and students about the importance of recycling. Gold River-Western Shore has earned recognition and awards for a number of key initiatives in recycling practices: Environment Green Award; Environment Silver School; RRFB School of the Year Award; and Waste Management Award.

The students are involved with helping with the recycling duties. Every school year, a teacher on staff organizes the 'Green Team'. At the after-school program students learn more about the 3 R's-Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. The students also become Mentors and share their knowledge with other students. Each year a class trip to the Waste Management Depot in Kaizer Meadows is arranged with the Municipality of Chester funding the cost of bussing.

- **School Garden**

A sign by the roadside in front of our school designates the pride that we have in the school garden. It has been a labour of love that began in 2001. Avid gardeners from the community volunteered their time with students and spent many hours preparing soil beds and planting a variety of shrubs and flowers. Teachers took their classes out to plant seeds every Spring and bulbs in the Fall. Donations of soil, plants and money came from community members who were eager to see the garden flourish.

The next phase is for the school to make a vegetable garden. The school has received a grant for \$1700.00 from the Lunenburg County Community Health Board. This spring, Gold River-Western Shore Elementary will purchase a greenhouse and other gardening supplies. Under the direction of the teachers, students from each class will have the opportunity to plant vegetables and care for them in the greenhouse until the plants are ready to be transplanted in an outdoor bed. The students will not only gain an understanding of how to grow food, they will eat their produce as part of the school's Lunch Program. The students involved in such nurturing programs develop empathy and pride in their community.

Community Relationships

The school has been a key part of the community with the land being donated by a local family for construction of the school. The family remains in the area today. The school opened its doors in 1954. The school has worked hard to gain and maintain strong home-school and community-school relationships. Parents regard Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School as an extension of their families and it shows through parent volunteers and community support for their school-based initiatives and projects.

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School has played a role in maintaining population in the community. Rural communities with schools fare better economically than those without schools. If Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School closed its doors, the population would decrease and local businesses and organizations would suffer. Currently our school has partnerships with:

- Adam's Transport Bottle Exchange & Enviro Depot has provided a bin at their depot labelled GRWSES. Everyone who deposits their recyclables in this bin is actually donating money to the school. The Enviro Depot donates the proceeds from these recyclables to our school. The money is used to purchase physical education equipment. Over \$1000 has been raised in this manner during the past year!
- Karl Webber of Big Red's Pizza has been delivering pizza every Friday for many years. He always donates a few extra slices without any charge for students who may not have a lunch. The school makes a profit on each slice of pizza that helps provide extra-curricular activities for our students.
- Glyda's Fruit & Vegetables delivers food items, on a moment's notice, which are used for our Breakfast and Lunch Programs. They also make subs for our Lunch program every Monday.

- Western Shore Legion Harding Branch #144 donates \$400 a year to help support our Breakfast Program.
- St. James Parish Outreach Program supports us with a donation of \$250.00 to help purchase school supplies or other items for those families who cannot afford to cover the fees.
- Western Shore & District Volunteer Fire Department donates half of their 50/50 Draw which is held at our Evening Christmas Concert. They also provide their facility free of charge for our afternoon and evening Concerts and for our Annual Christmas Dinner served to staff and students.
- Daphne's Flowers provides specialty Christmas items that we sell to raise funds to help cover the Gr.3/4 Camp Mush-A-Mush experience, as well as class trips, bussing expenses, etc. For the last two years, our school has held a Spring Flower Campaign with Daphne supplying many varieties of plants and hanging flower baskets. The families in the community generously support this project which provides funds for guest speakers, musical presentations, etc.
- Atlantica Hotel & Marina Oak Island provides their swimming pool free of charge to the school for the Swim to Survive program and for recreational swims for our students. They have even offered their facility to hold our 2013 Christmas Concerts!
- Staff of Municipality of the District of Chester, through their Casual Days donations program in December, donated \$250 to help support our Breakfast Program.
- \$500 donation from anonymous family was given to the school; they became aware of some of the needs within our school population and wanted to help.

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School has worked hard to maintain and continue to grow partnerships within the community, constantly growing the programs and services offered at the school, i.e.; En Pointe Studio, Early Intervention, Chester & Area Family Resource Centre, Kidz Zone, Chester Recreation, and community fundraisers. At a recent public meeting, Denise

Peterson-Rafuse shared information on how to further capitalize on community opportunities. Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School will continue to explore the needs of the community and the possibility of securing the funding and programs that would best service those needs. Mrs. Peterson-Rafuse commented on the need to work with the community in a holistic approach.

Parents and community members also displayed concerns over the possibility of our community dying off. What would happen to the future generation(s)? Who would be willing to move here if there was no school for their child(ren)? As one parent voiced it, "I think of the teachers in this school are like a parent to my student when I am not there. Pushing the kids away right now is not only going to affect their education.....[and] the future for this area of Nova Scotia all the way up to Martin's Point....you are not going to get people to move to this area if there is not a school for the kids to go to....they have to go all the way to Chester."

Another community member, who had children go through Gold River-Western Shore Elementary, also commented that his child would like to return to the area to live and teach at Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School if possible. He is a land owner/developer and the value of land is going down if there is no reason for families to move back.

Another parent expressed her concern that, "the loss of this school is a huge loss to the community and it means a lot to everyone here...this school is really important, Chester as a community does not have the same feel.....there will be no lights on." This quote refers to the village of Chester that has a number of summer residents compared to our community where people live all year round and is more affordable for the average family.

Over the years businesses and community organizations have found it easy to make links due to the positive relationships established and the fact that we are a close knit community where no one is a stranger and the community plays a role in raising the child. Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School operates as a community within a community.

Acknowledgements:

The authors of this report would like to thank:

Study Committee Members

Gold River-Western Shore Staff

School Community Members, Local businesses and organization

South Shore Regional School Board Staff

Conclusion:

At Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School there is a focus on teaching and educating the whole student. Each student is known and valued. There is a sense of belonging, providing an elevated self-esteem; our children will not be lost in the crowd and do not fall through the cracks. Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School provides an intimate and personalized learning environment with a child focused and family centered approach to learning. Staff and parents together shape the school. Parents and teachers are on a first name basis and become allies in creating student success. As a result, students and their families have a sense of pride in their community, school and self. ***At Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School we truly abide by the SSRSB motto: "Students first".***

The impact on Chester District cannot be addressed without taking Gold River-Western Shore Elementary into consideration. Chester District's school climate, routines, parent involvement, School Advisory Council, and everything that makes up their school has been established. This is also true of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School. The impact on Chester District Elementary School will no doubt mean changes. However, students of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary will have to move away from what they, their parents, grandparents and other caregivers have known as their comfort zone. The transition for many of the children will take time with lots of caring, sharing and cooperation from all parties involved. From the words of our school song, written by the students under direction of Reid Campbell, ***"Our School is More than Walls and a Floor!"***

Appendix A: Operational Cost

As mentioned previously, Mr. Wellsley Eisnor, who recently retired from Operations at the South Shore Regional School Board, created the chart inserted on the next page.

Item #	Action Item	Approximate Cost SB	Actual Approximate Cost								
1	Chimney Rebuild	\$ 60,000.00	\$	20,000.00		Install Selkirk Type or Stainless Steel Liner					
2	Upgrade Water Filters, Conditioners	\$ 15,000.00	Maintenance								
3	Electrical Upgrade, New Service & Sub Panels	\$ 350,000.00	\$	100,000.00							
4	Side Panels in room next to Gym	\$ 25,000.00	\$	25,000.00							
5	RO System for drinking water	\$ 10,000.00	Maintenance								
6	Sprinkler Tanks in pit area	\$ 350,000.00	\$	100,000.00		Install Fire Pump & Cistern					
7	Dig up around footing, new sub soil drains	\$ 50,000.00	????????????			There is no evidence this would solve the water issue					
8	Would need AHU, Has only exhaust	\$ 150,000.00	????????????			No requirement for a Ventilation System				unless a Major renovation/addition were to happen	
9	Will soon need security system upgrade	\$ 15,000.00	\$	5,000.00							
10	Main Roof	\$ 350,000.00	\$	132,000.00		Has a 2-ply Roof would only require a Cap Sheet replacement					
11	New Boiler with outside reset control	\$ 100,000.00	\$	8,000.00		New Boilers stored in the Boiler Room just need to be installed					
12	Asbestos issues need to be addressed	TBD	TBD								
13	Air Quality Issues (Staff getting sick)	TBD	TBD								
	Accessibility	\$ 1,475,000.00	\$	390,000.00							
		\$ 50,000.00	Not Required								
		\$ 1,525,000.00									
	Building met the code of the day only required to meet todays standard if building was to have a major renovation same as the majority of buildings in the region.										
	Move would only have marginal cost as far as operating costs. Adding 100 occupants would have an impact on operating cost supplies, Power, water, Maintenance										
	Transportation should have a more detailed study as to the cost, travel time and passenger age groups per bus										
	Sprinkler System - Tanks are inspected internally by the Dept. Labor every three years & repaired, when indicated by the inspector										
	I cannot find any instance where sprinkler tanks have been taken out of service & if this did happen a cistern with a fire pump would be installed as this is the standard today.										
	This needs to go in appendix: The gym capacity for Chester District School states that it is 600 people. However, this is not the case for sitting capacity during the Christmas concert. We need to factor in the students that are on the stage, as well as the parents in the audience and the chairs. If we were to add our students to the present students at Chester District, we would need to have two full days of concerts. We could not fit all of the parents in one evening showing of the concert. This would create a great deal of extra work for the music teacher to ensure that the kids are able to perform on both nights. As mentioned in many areas of this report, transportation is an issue for some of the parents at the school. If there were two nights of Christmas concerts, they would have to drive their children to Chester two nights in a row and only be able to see the concert on one night. This will be very difficult for some of our families who do not have adequate transportation and who are working parents.										

Appendix B: After School Activities

1. Grade 4-5 Bike Club Thursdays 1:45-3:15 (beginning Sept. 20th)
2. Terry Fox Run Sept. 27th - Whole School
3. Soccer House League for Grades 3,4, 5 on Tuesdays beginning Sept. 15th
Coaches Patrick Johnston/Alisa Johnson
4. Parent & Tot Time beginning Oct. 4th on Thursdays 10-11:30 a.m. at GRWSES Program for children 0-6 years old (provided by the South Shore Family Resource Association),
5. International Walk to School Day on Wednesday, October 10th 7:40 a.m. Light continental breakfast served upon arrival at the school.
6. Western Shore & District Volunteer Fire Department at GRWSES for whole day re: Fire Prevention Week Activities on October 11th
7. DARE Program Gr. 5 starts Oct. 23rd (Tuesdays) – Constable Susan Foote
8. After-School Art Program – by the Chester Art Centre 8 Weeks – every Wednesday starting Oct. 10-Nov. 28 2:00-3:30 p.m.
9. Reading for Fun for P-2 After-school every Day 2 from 1:45-2:45 p.m. Starts Oct. 22nd. Leader: Kim Armstrong, assisted by Julia Moule Also, pre-school aged children 3-4 years old are welcome to attend the program.
10. Acadia First Nation's After-School Program begins Oct. 22nd at the AFN Health Centre 2:15-4:15 p.m. every Wednesday and Thursday.
11. Nov. 8th Remembrance Day Ceremony at 10:30 a.m. Included in the program was a Power Point presentation to showcase local veterans who have served or are serving our country. Following the Ceremony, a Reception for the Veterans was held.
12. Nov. 19th After-School Tumbling from 1:45-3:00 p.m. on Tuesdays
13. Nov. 26th – Hot Breakfast for staff and students 7:40 a.m. served by volunteers
14. November 30th – GRWSES enters Atlantica Oak Island 1st Annual Gingerbread House Contest with a replica of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School.
15. Dec. 7th – GRWSES is chosen as the WINNER of the 1st Annual Gingerbread House Contest. Michael Issac reads to all classes, "How the Cougar Came to be Called a Ghost Cat".
16. GRWSES Christmas Concert at Western Shore Fire Hall on Dec. 12th with an afternoon and evening performance.
17. Dec. 14th – GRWSES Staff placed the successful bid of \$250. to buy back our gingerbread house replica of our school. Donations go to the Children's Wish Fund.
18. Dec. 10th to Dec. 14th – Fill the Pirate Ship with Food for the Lighthouse Food Bank in Chester.
19. Dec. 17th – Whole school goes swimming at the Atlantica Oak Island – their prize for winning the First Annual Gingerbread Contest sponsored by Atlantica Oak Island!
20. Dec. 19th - Carol Sing at school in the morning, followed by Annual FREE Christmas Dinner for Staff & Students at the Western Shore Fire Hall at 12:00 Noon.
21. Dec. 20th – Lots of Christmas Craft activities and board games planned for the afternoon.
+ Soup Can Races!! during the week of Dec. 17th with the whole school, including staff, participating.
22. Jan. 2013 Writing Club-Grades 2-5. Julia Moule and Christine Chapman
23. Jan 2013 After school basketball Grades 3-5 Patrick Johnston and Alisa Johnson

Appendix C: Pre-Primary Program

Gold River Western Shore Elementary School was the only School in the South Shore Regional School Board to jump at the chance to offer a Pre-Primary Program to eighteen four year olds per school year. This program was offered to children within its own catchment area on a first come first serve basis. It operated from January to June 2006, September 2006-June 2007, and September 2007-June 2008. The program was developed and implemented by experienced, licensed early educators under the supervision of the school administration through the Pre-Primary Education Initiative in partnership with the Department of Health and Community Services. It provided a full day, high quality, research based early learning program focused on the physical, cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional outcomes of young children.

Comprehensive services for early childhood development and learning early provided intervention for children at risk. Parents and community members applauded the growth and successes of the preschoolers, realizing that this no fee program levelled the playing field for some children who wouldn't have been able to enrol in a program such as this, even if it were available. Teachers witnessed the positive results in subsequent years as these students matured. This thriving program did not survive as the province lowered the entry age for school children, eliminating it and 16 others operating in the province.

Appendix D: Letters of Support

Over the next several pages you will read Letters of Support that were forwarded by many community members to the Study Committee.



CHESTER AND AREA FAMILY RESOURCE CENTRE

P.O. Box 99, Chester Nova Scotia B0J 1J0, Tel. 275-4347 Fax 275-2013
info@chesterfamilycentre.ca www.chesterfamilycentre.ca

January 7, 2013

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary
6200 Highway #3, P.O. Box 68
Western Shore, Nova Scotia
B0J 3M0

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter of support on behalf of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary to remain open and continue to offer Grades Primary to Five.

The Chester and Area Family Resource Centre has been partnering with Gold River-Western Shore Elementary since 2002 offering the Kidz Zone After-School Program. The school does a wonderful job of educating, nurturing and inspiring the children to be their best and take care of each other and their community.

The Kidz Zone After-School Program is licensed by the Department of Community Services. The license is for 15 full-time (5 days per week) children to attend after-school, if the school were closed these children would be without care as we cannot accommodate them at our Chester location.

Over the years the Chester and Area Family Resource Centre has offered After-School programs at Aspotogan Consolidated Elementary School, Centre Consolidated School and we continue to offer After-School programs at Bayview Community School as well as Gold River-Western Shore Elementary. *The Chester and Area Family Resource Centre strongly believes that it is of the utmost importance that children attend school in the community to which they belong.*

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Heather Daw
Centre Director
Chester & Area Family Resource Centre

CLYDE M. RICHARDSON'S GARAGE LTD.

6525 Highway #3
PO BOX 24,
WESTERN SHORE,
NOVA SCOTIA, B0J3M0

December 10, 2012

Gold River – Western Shore Elementary
6200 Highway #3
PO Box 68
Western Shore, Nova Scotia
B0J3M0

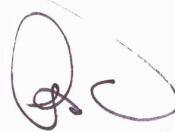
Dear Sir/Madame,

I cannot imagine the loss of Gold River – Western Shore Elementary Scholl.

The school is an anchor for our communities. It's value cannot be measured in a dollar and cents manner. Local families with young children depend on the school for a superior hands on and personal education. The intimate class size will never be duplicated in a larger school environment.

Busing these young students will add a considerable amount of time to their day, I would imagine approximately 1 hour in travel and wait times alone. The added hours will be tiring to say the least, especially for the youngest.

As a long time business owner in Western Shore, I feel that Gold River – Western Shore Elementary School is an asset for the entire area and should not be closed to save a few dollars.



Roy Conrad
Partner
Clyde M. Richardson's Garage Ltd.

A letter.

from Tim Harris:

To whom it may concern,

I attended the Gold River School - Public Meeting last night (Jan 9 2013). The meeting went very, very well. Great articulate speakers from the public and good responses from the Deloitte Report members. Download report here: http://www.ssrbs.ca/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=1487

"The Gold River School is special to the community, that is a given. A high level of volunteerism, teacher support and extracurricular activities that culminate into a school that WORKS! What I heard last night was a lesson in how ALL schools should work in a community!

Listen up SSRBS. This school is not broken, but you have the power to 'break it'. Don't!!

While the 'numbers' show the enrolment is down, this is a temporary thing for this area. As a real estate Broker I see the Gold River - Western Shore beginning to repopulate with new young home owners ready to start a family and existing small families. We are making more sales in this area everyday. The homes are affordable, location to convenience stores, Mahone Bay and other social amenities are great. I believe the diminishing enrolment predictions going forward to 2016 are wrong. The enrolment is going to go back up over the next 5 years and by 2018 you will see a vast increase in enrolment.

Don't forsake the 'long term' benefit for 'short term' gain. Once you make this devastating mistake, we will lose a jewel within our school system. A jewel that should be studied and modeled around Nova Scotia as a perfect combination of student, teacher and volunteer involvement. Making the whole of this school greater than the parts."

Tim Harris
902.275.7611

To whom it may concern,

My name is Melissa Kaizer. I was a student of GRWS elementary school in 1984, and when the time came to register my son for school in 2011, I can't explain the comfort and joy I had of knowing what a wonderful familiar environment that I would be sending him to.

Madden is a very shy child, although at home very chatty and outgoing. In new surroundings, he is very shy and quiet, so we didn't know what to expect for his first year at school. So it came to no surprise to us that he was a bit stand-offish, and didn't always communicate with teachers and other staff members. He would also not go to the washroom during school time, so he would have accidents in class. He wouldn't play at lunch because he was holding his pee and it was very uncomfortable to run around and play with others. So of course, I and his teacher had some concerns. I knew that I had to do something about this so it wouldn't affect his social interactions with his classmates.

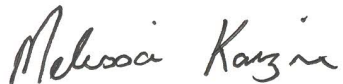
With the permission of his teacher and the principal, they allowed me to come down to the school at 12:30 pm every day and take him to the washroom. And because the school is very close to my work place, I was able to do this for him. So by the end of the year he was going to washroom with a buddy or by himself. Just by knowing that I was only minutes away from him made a big impact on his comfort level. The staff of GRWS had such kindness, patience and compassion for him. Now he is in his second year of school and he has flourished, he loves his school and communicates with the staff. It's such a comfort to me knowing he is in such an awesome school environment that knows and meets his needs.

This year will be my daughter Gracie's first year of school, and I can only hope that she will be able to experience the same kindness and devotion that the staff of GRWS elementary school has given all students over the years.

I would also like to share with you the community outreach and support that people have for GRWS Elementary School. My husband, Kelly Myra, owns Adams Bottle Exchange in Gold River. The school wanted to raise money for new gym equipment, so a fellow parent, Terri-Lynn Melvin, suggested a bottle drive. That is where volunteers would go house to house asking for any empty refundable beverage containers and with success raised over \$300.00. Since this was a great opportunity to raise money for the school, my husband and I decided to keep taking bottle donations and over the last year the school has received well over \$1000.00 thanks to parents and others in the community.

With this being said I can only hope that others recognize the importance of keeping small schools open for future generations to have the opportunity of knowing the dedication like GRWS elementary has always provided its students.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melissa Kaizer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'M' and a distinct 'K'.

Melissa Kaizer

To whom it may concern

I am writing today to complain about you shutting the Gold River/ Western Shore School down. My two children went there and I was hoping that if I have grandchildren they could go there too. When my children went there I volunteered with lunch programs, class trips, reading programs, fun days etc., I know they still have great volunteers there, the community gets involved. I loved it!!

I do not understand why you spent so much money on upgrading a school you are considering shutting down. It is bad enough the government is cutting back on the education of the next generations but that is a down right disgraceful waste.

I am the post mistress for Western Shore and area. I have noticed a definite baby boom in this area. It seems like every young couple has either had a baby or expecting one. Including the principal. If you keep the school open in the next 3 to 5 years there will be lots of children to go there

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and I do hope you consider keeping the school open.



Valerie Bond



MUNICIPALITY OF THE DISTRICT OF CHESTER

PO Box 369, Chester, NS B0J 1J0
Telephone: 902-275-3554 Facsimile: 902-275-4771

151 King Street, Chester, NS
email: administration@chester.ca
RE: 2012-674

December 17, 2012

FAXED
Dec 17/12

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School
6200 Highway 3
PO Box 68
WESTERN SHORE NS B0J 1J0

Dear GRWS and School Review Committee:

Thank you for your letter dated December 3, 2012 regarding the review of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School. The letter was provided to members of Council on December 13 and, at that time, the following motion was approved:

2012-674 MOVED by Councillor Myra, SECONDED by Deputy Warden Shatford that a letter of support to keep the Gold River Western Shore Elementary School (GRWS) open and continue to offer Grades Primary-Five be forwarded to GRWS. CARRIED.

Members of Council believe in the benefits of smaller community based schools and Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School is a school that is treasured by the communities and families it serves. The atmosphere is cozy and friendly and just the type of school many parents appreciate for their young children.

The Municipality, in partnership with GRWS, provides an after-school activity program through the Recreation & Parks Department that allows children of working parents to remain in a safe and active environment following school hours. As well, PRO Kids has provided equipment for activities and GRWS has also done fundraising for the PRO Kids program.

Please consider this letter as one of support for maintaining the status quo to keep Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School open and continue to offer Grades Primary-Five.

Yours truly,

Allen Webber
Warden

Pre-Primary Program

January 17, 2013

The Pre-Primary Program which operated with two qualified teachers at Gold River Western Shore School had an enrollment of 18 four year olds each year from 2006 to 2008. From day one we were accepted as part of the school and our schedule was successfully integrated into the daily routine of the school. The Pre-Primary Program had an impact on the community and the school by bringing staff, parents and children together under one roof. While the program was play-based, it also taught children how to get along and helped prepare them for Primary. The Pre-Primary Program left behind learning materials which continues to be utilized by the students as well as the community.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Ryan".

Jean Ryan

Pre-Primary Staff Member

K.C. Restaurant Limited

December 2012

Box 235

Western Shore

N.S. B0J 3M0

Dear Sarah:

Thank you for an opportunity to respond to your Impact Assessment Report on the future of Gold River Western Shore Elementary. I am in favor for the school remaining open for the children, grades Primary - Five, an important part of their foundation years.

I have thoughts of the potential closing of the school being connected to any performance ratings the school may have. I think of the responses to requests from South Shore Regional School Board and/or the Department of Education for changes - improvements within the school to better accommodate all children in the education process. Faculty, students, and volunteers have shown the results of their efforts, in compliance, and their reward should not be the closure of the school.

One example is the hot lunch program, and that is when my business unselfishly came on board to supply fresh-pizza for the children. However, not just any pizza; I can hear their voices... "BigRed's pizza. It is a joy. This one (and there are others) initiative has resulted in a complimenting reward back to the community. Prior students of G.R.W.S.E. have, as yourself, with post-graduate knowledge, returned to the Gold River, Western Shore, Martin's Point community. Prior students, who,

with their families, bring expertise in public education, public health, E.H.S., culinary arts, horticulture, office and business administration, business ownership, industrial manufacturing, public safety, skilled trades, (are some); All viable resources for a sustainable community.

I am hoping a member(s) of the South Shore Regional School Board can have time to speak with Ray Ivany. He, with Susanna Fueller, Dan Christmas, John Bragg and Irene d'Entremont are members of the new Nova Scotia Commission on Building Our New Economy. Ray, and education consultant Paul Bennett, were guests on a December 10th broadcast of C.B.C.'s radio's Mainstreet. Ray understands the importance of a school in a community.

Again, I vote for the "status quo."

Thank you for your time.

KBullw



Western Shore & District Fire Department

*P.O. Box 236, Western Shore
Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia
B0J 3M0*

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary
P.O. Box 68
Western Shore, Nova Scotia
B0J 3M0

January 3, 2013

Dear Teachers, Students, Parents of GRWSE and School Review Committee Members:

We the members of the Western Shore and District Fire Department have been requested to write a letter in support of Gold River-Western Shore Elementary.

This school is a huge asset to our community. They help to make a connection between the fire service and education that we help to provide to our local communities covered by our district. With having the school so close we are able to visit the children, allow them to explore our equipment and allows us the opportunity to have a working relationship with the children. Again this relationship allows us to educate the children about fire safety and to encourage the children to not be afraid of members in an emergency situation. This is something we all need to depend on for our communities safety and well being.

We also provide a great service to our school. We offer our building to GRWSE, allowing the children and staff a place to host some events, that would take up too much space at the school. This allows the school to participate as a group for events instead of offering it at different times for different grades.

We are glad to have this connection with our school. Reaching out to our community members is a great part of keeping our community safe. As we all know it takes a community to raise a child; and Gold River-Western Shore Elementary is the heart of these communities that we protect. Please keep Our school open. Give us this out reach to help keep the members in our communities safe and well educated on fire safety.

Thank you for your time. If you need any further questions answered or have any comments please contact Chief Scott Rafuse at 627-2807.

Sincerely Yours,

Scott Rafuse *Chief Rafuse*
Chief of Western Shore and District Fire Department

Western Shore and Area Improvement Association

*6485 Highway #3
WESTERN SHORE,
NOVA SCOTIA, B0J3M0*

December 11, 2012

*Gold River – Western Shore Elementary
6200 Highway #3
PO Box 68
Western Shore, Nova Scotia
B0J3M0*

Dear Sir/Madame,

The members and directors of Western Shore and Area Improvement Association wish to support the ongoing operation of Gold River – Western Shore Elementary.

This school is not just a building, it is part of the fabric the makes up Western Shore, Gold River and the surrounding area. Young families have a strong connection with the school and it's teachers. The quality of education , in our opinion, is above average.

When a family decides to locate in any community, the availability of education is very important. The amount of travel time to and from school is and should be very important when deciding where to live. Small town Nova Scotia is becoming an endangered species and continued closings of schools and other government facilities is not the answer.

Please accept the status quo alternative and keep the school open.



*Roy Conrad
Chairperson
Western Shore and Area Improvement Association*

Darrin and Melonie Swinamer
46 Lawrence Hatt Road
Western Shore, NS B0J 3M0

January 8, 2013

To the Members of the South Shore Regional School Board:

Our daughter Emily is a very social, creative 7-year old in the Second Grade at Gold River - Western Shore Elementary. Since the beginning of Grade Primary, she made friends and got to know all of the teachers and staff at the school. After the first couple of months in the school, she started visiting other classrooms, the school office and the principle. Being a small school, we knew that we could trust that all of the staff at the school knew her and watched out for her, making sure she got back to where she was supposed to be. Emily is an actor, an artist, a dancer and very gregarious. We know that our community school helped her develop into the girl she is today and the young lady she will become.

During Emily's first two years in school, she went to the Kids Zone After School Program at GRWSE. Having the program on-site, close to home, was very comforting and convenient. This year, in Grade 2, she has been coming home after school but we have used the Kids Zone ASP a couple of times and like knowing it is available. We both work full time but have the advantage of adjusting schedules to be home after school. If our situation were to change, we would need to enroll her in the ASP again. If she is in Chester, that will mean extra travel time, extra cost for gas, wear on our vehicles and be very inconvenient. We have been told that the Kids Zone ASP in Chester is already at capacity and may not be able to accommodate the extra students coming from GRWSE.

Living so close to the school, Emily is home within 10 minutes of the school day ending and we get to spend a lot of time with her in the afternoon. If GRWSE closes and the students are moved to Chester, we will lose about an hour with her everyday due to extra travel time. Since school starts at the same time in Chester, she will have to get up earlier in the morning, which means going to bed earlier, which means losing even more time.

Our family has two vehicles, allowing us to pick Emily up if she stays for after-school activities. However, we know there are several other parents in the community who do not have vehicles and/or a means to travel to Chester. Their children will be less likely to participate in after-school programs, which many students enjoy now, if they are moved to another school.

Gold River - Western Shore Elementary has been at the centre of this community for many decades. The school has a reputation for higher standards of learning and the teachers/staff do their best to have lots of extra-curricular activities available for the students, often using their personal time. Many of the current students' parents and even some grandparents went to GRWSE. It truly is a community school. Losing the school, will create more than just the void of an empty building; it may cause people to move away, or closer to Chester or Mahone Bay for their kids and possibly away from family and friends.

We love our School and we want to keep our school! Please vote against closing Gold River - Western Shore Elementary in March 2013. Thank You.

Compassionately,

Darrin and Melonie Swinamer (and Emily too)

13 January 2013

To: Members of the School Review Committee

The Deloitte Report (using assessment criteria agreed-upon by the Superintendent) fails to address many of the very significant family and community impacts associated with a potential decision to close the Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School. The report may provide some useful data for consideration but it most definitely should *not* be the sole source relied upon for decision-making. The Board must look at the Deloitte 'facts' with a very critical eye; many people question the projections used for bussing times and future student enrollments. The Deloitte Team also speculated (incorrectly) as to why there were 5 different principals (not 7 as stated) as an indicator of vulnerability. In actual fact decisions to step-down were based on individual and personal circumstances.

As we heard at the community meeting on January 9th, many of the assumptions about facility requirements and projected costs for upgrading merit more in-depth examination. For example, perhaps the school does not need to install an elevator if the 2nd floor is no longer used. Recent upgrades such as insulation, new windows, new roof and solar panels cost the Board and taxpayers a lot of money. If the school closes, then a lot of money has been squandered. The playground is now state-of-the-art and is used by families year-round, not just during school hours.

Dr. Gunn's experience as an administrator is evident throughout the report; his concerns about excessive burdens on teaching and support staff in a small school need to be examined but they should not overshadow concerns about students, families and the community. With respect to his point that staff need to attend meetings at Head Office (as math or literacy mentors, members of committees, etc.,) I find it remarkable that the Board does not make greater use of the technology at hand. Teleconferencing and webinars would reduce the need for travel and are widely-used in business and the not-for-profit sectors.

I was disappointed that the Deloitte team named only Geoff MacDonald, a municipal planner, as their source of information about proposed community impacts (though I am pleased they did speak with two representatives of the Acadia First Nations community). Many other individuals should have been interviewed so that the connections between the school and the community were more fully articulated and weighted in the report. To name a few: Shirley Burris, Schools Plus; Jody Conrad, Municipal Recreation Department; Lynn Myra, Public Health; Kidz Zone instructors; Gary Langille, Mahone Bay and Area Lions Club. Geoff MacDonald is a planner; he is not an expert in community sustainability.

In 2009 the Indigo (Chapters) Foundation awarded GRWES \$33,000 (over three years) to buy much-needed library books and educational materials. We were one of nine

schools to receive this grant Canada-wide, and one of a select number of schools in Nova Scotia to be selected over the life of this fund. Why were we chosen? Because we demonstrated we were a 'high needs' but also vibrant, caring and committed school, supported by a close-knit community. Our school is the centre and heart of the community; it is the only family-centred institution/organization in Gold River-Western Shore.

The successes of programs such as the Pre-Primary Pilot Program, the Family Literacy Program, Parent and Tot program, Kidz Zone and After School Programs are tangible examples of how the school is serving families and supporting community needs.

Talk to realtors—they confirm the community is growing. It is not an exclusive retirement community with an aging demographic. Young families are moving here because property is affordable, because there is a small community school (noted for its excellent staff) with beautiful surroundings. Closing Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School would be a cruel decision. Students and the community will not be well-served. They will be the collateral damage of consolidation.

I urge you to put the best interests of students, families and the community ahead of the relatively few dollars the accountants claim might be saved by closing GRWSES.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Lamson, former Library Technician & Co-Chair School Accreditation Committee

★ ★ ★ ★
ATLANTICA
HOTEL & MARINA
OAK ISLAND

January 23, 2013

Gold River-Western Shore Elementary
6200 Highway #3, P.O. Box 68
Western Shore, Nova Scotia
B0J 3M0

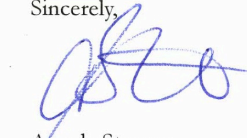
Dear To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is in reference to the recent decision to have the Gold River- Western Shore Elementary School under review for permanent closure. On behalf of the employees of Atlantica Oak Island Hotel and Marina, we are concerned about this possible closure. Many our employees have children that attend this school. With the possible decision to transport these children to the Chester area, there will certainly be an impact on our work environment. From driving their children to and from the school, earlier bus departures and losing after school care in the area, all issues that will increase the potential of reduced hours and higher absenteeism from the majority of our employee pool.

As well, the school has always been a contributor to the success of the local businesses in the Western Shore Community, particularly Atlantica Oak Island Hotel and Marina. That certainly has been displayed recently with our recent Gingerbread House Contest. The school was a tremendously supporter and contributed greatly to its success. There are many examples of how the school has contributed to improving our sense of community involvement.

With this letter, I would request that reconsider the possible closure of the Gold River-Western Shore Elementary School. Personally speaking as a mother of a student of the school, a community member and as a business leader in the area, this decision needs to consider the financial impact it will have on all aspects of the community.

Sincerely,



Angela Steeves
General Manager

ATLANTICAOAKISLAND.COM

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