

REGION OF OTTAWA CARLETON  
 RÉGION D'OTTAWA CARLETON

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**REPORT**  
**RAPPORT**

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Our File/N/Réf.  
 Your File/V/Réf.

DATE 30 March 1999

TO/DEST. Co-ordinator Community Services Committee

FROM/EXP. Commissioner, Social Services Department

SUBJECT/OBJET **IMPACT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES ON ADULT LEARNERS**

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### **DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION**

**That the Community Services Committee receive this report for information.**

### **PURPOSE**

Previously, staff reported on this issue at the 3 December 1998 meeting of the Community Services Committee, and at the 5 February 1999 meeting of the Planning and Environment Committee. Since then a number of events have taken place especially with respect to the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board (OCCSB). This report will provide an update on the impact of decisions taken by the School Boards on Adult Learners.

### **BACKGROUND**

Programs for adult learners include English as a Second Language (ESL), French as a Second Language (FSL), and Literacy and Basic Skills (Basic Skills). An estimated 6,000 adult learners are expected to participate in these programs in schools across Ottawa-Carleton in 1999. It is estimated that half of these adult learners (3,000) would be social assistance recipients.

The Region considers these programs to be essential supports for adults moving toward self-sufficiency. Lack of proficiency in at least one official language, or lack of literacy and basic skills, constitute a major barrier to labour force participation, and thus prevent people moving from social assistance to employment. Furthermore, the Region's economic development depends on having a literate, skilled workforce. One of the building blocks of such a workforce is the provision of ESL, FSL, and Basic Skills programs for adult learners.

Currently, funds flowing from Provincial and Federal governments for these programs provide program operating costs. Programming dollars for ESL, FSL and Basic Skills are not in jeopardy. However, new Provincial funding formulas affecting local School Boards do not include Operations or Building Renewal grants to maintain and operate buildings for “non-qualifying” programs such as ESL, FSL and Basic Skills. This is one factor potentially affecting School Board decisions on school closures.

### UPDATE ON SCHOOL BOARDS ACTIONS

No schools closures will affect Adult Learners at the Conseil des écoles publiques de l’Est de l’Ontario (French Public ) where an estimated 1,500 adult learners participate in FSL classes. At the Ottawa -Carleton District School Board (OCDB) the first round of proposed school closures will not affect schools where ESL and Basic Skills programs are held. The OCDB, projects there are about 2,000 learners in these programs.

### Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board (OCCSB)

There are four schools operated by the OCCSB devoted exclusively to Adult Learners: St Andrew’s, St Joseph, St Patrick and Queen of Angels. These four schools offer ESL, FSL, Literacy and Basic Skills classes to approximately 2,500 adult learners. The schools provide classes at every level from basic to advanced literacy, and also offer other skills training programs such as computer skills. They are open 12 hours a day, 12 months a year. The schools work in partnership with community groups, immigrant and settlement organisations as well as literacy groups and also provide on-site support services for learners and their families. St Joseph’s Adult School also operates the Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) on the first floor of De Mazenod school.

As the schools provide an appropriate environment for adult learners, they represent an effective model of service delivery. Funding from the Provincial and Federal governments for these programs is not at risk. However, the OCCSB is faced with a serious problem regarding these schools. The new provincial funding model links money for new schools in the suburbs with disposal of surplus property inside the greenbelt. In order to receive capital dollars to build desperately needed new schools, the board must divest itself of surplus property and excess capacity such as non operating schools.

The Board of Trustees and administration have used every possible opportunity to ask the Ministry of Education and Training for an exemption to the funding model which would count the adult day schools as occupied space. Students and instructors have written to the Minister of Education and a petition was presented in the legislature at the end of the last sitting. Many community organisations and settlement agencies have also written to express their concerns. Regional Council adopted a series of motions which were forwarded to local school boards, local M.P.P.s, The Minister of Education and Training and the Leaders of all provincial parties. To date there has been no positive response from the Ministry regarding an exemption to this policy.

At a meeting of the Board of Trustees of the OCCSB held March 23, 1999, the Board adopted the following motions:

1. That the following facilities be declared surplus to the regular day school requirements of the Board and that the said properties be disposed of in accordance with a future disposal plan (including timelines, leases to alternate facilities, etc.) to be developed by Administration:

Barrette, Jean XXIII, Queen of Angels, St Agnes, St Andrew, St Patrick,

2. That the Board confirm its support for the continuing education programs offered in the non-operating schools; and
3. That administration develop plans for relocation, leaseback and or other accommodation arrangements to allow the continuation of these programs.
4. That the plans being developed endeavour to ensure programs are geographically located within the reach of the communities and are affordable to both students and the Board.
5. That the implementation plan for the non-operating schools and continuing education facilities be brought back to the Board of Trustees for approval.

The Board also adopted a motion that would close the adult learner program located at De Mazenod School and request that the Ministry recognise De Mazenod and Canadian Martyrs schools as non-classroom space and that Administration develop a plan for the relocation of specific administrative units to these locations for Board approval.

Staff of the OCCSB will now develop plans for leaseback, relocation and/or explore other accommodation options to allow for continuation of these programs. The Board is committed to continuing the programs they offer to adult learners.

### Funding

The Adult Schools operate at no cost to the Board's ratepayers. Custodial costs for the Adult Schools are recovered from the Adult Education Grant while other maintenance and operating costs are recovered from the Board's general revenues. Programs generally run on a cost-recovery basis, working within the Ministry of Education and Training's Adult Education Grant of \$2,257.00 per year for each full time equivalent student.

The Ministry of Education and Training has historically ignored the capital costs of maintaining the non-operating schools which house the Adult Schools. Consequently, deferred maintenance has resulted in renewal costs of \$3.6M which have accumulated in conjunction with these schools. There is no source of funding emanating from the Ministry of Education and Training for this purpose.

## PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Each school board has undertaken an extensive public consultation in their review of school closures. Regional staff have had discussions with School Board officials, staff at the Ministry of Education and Training and staff at local literacy programs.

## CONCLUSIONS

While solutions have not been found at this time for the relocation of Adult Learner programs, Regional staff will continue to work with the School Boards to ensure that space is available for the continuation of these programs. Staff have been advised that the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board is preparing a report which will layout the plans for relocation, leaseback and/or other accommodation arrangements to allow the continuation of these programs. This report should be ready shortly and staff from Social Services will continue to be in contact with the Board and will advise Committee and Council of events as they unfold.

*Approved by  
Dick Stewart*