



School Retention Plan

At a regular meeting of Council on December 2, 2020, Township of Zorra Council adopted the Township's School Retention Plan as suggested by the Zorra Local School Committee. The resolution from Zorra Council is as follows:

Item 9(b)

Resolution No. 17-12-2020

Moved by: Katie Davies

Seconded by: Ron Forbes

"THAT the resolution from the Zorra Local School Committee be received and adopted as the Zorra School Retention Plan."

Disposition: Carried

Whereby, the resolution from the Zorra Local School Committee was as follows:

"THAT the Zorra Local School Committee recommends to the Council of the Township of Zorra:

- 1. To continue including a school retention plan as part of the Township's Strategic Plan and advocate accordingly.**
- 2. To maintain an ongoing membership in the Community Schools Alliance (CSA).**
- 3. Supports, through resolution, the CSA's endorsement of the Rural and Northern Education Fund (RNEF) as an appropriate differentiator and funding model for rural and northern schools.**
- 4. Request that the Thames Valley District School Board (TVDSB) and London District Catholic School Board (LDCSB) suggest possible reallocation of Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) to support a net funding neutral increase in the RNEF.**
- 5. Recommend that the TVDSB review its policies for capacity planning and pupil accommodation reviews to formally recognize the importance and value to the community of rural and single school community schools.**
- 6. Request communication and notification on an ongoing basis from all relevant School Boards of any areas of study considering possible consolidation, closure, additions, or new builds.**
- 7. Request annual planning reports from all relevant School Boards for all Zorra schools and possibly related/affected/affecting schools and compare municipal growth forecasts and school board(s) growth forecasts identifying any discrepancies; and**
- 8. Forward this resolution to the Thames Valley District School Board's Rural Education Task Force (RETF), and Oxford County for support."**

Please see the following pages for background and comments regarding the School Retention Plan formation.

BACKGROUND & COMMENTS:

The purpose of the Zorra Local School Committee (ZLSC) is to make recommendations to Council regarding opportunities for the Township of Zorra to maximize long term economic development by attracting and retaining students through the development of a “School Retention Plan” in accordance with the Township of Zorra’s Strategic Plan. The above recommendations will serve as the Township of Zorra’s school retention strategy.

One of the Township’s Strategic Plan states: “Continue school retention strategy by advocating with Oxford County Planning that schools are an integral part of the Planning Process and should be reflected in the County Strategic Plan and Official Plan, and lobbying the Provincial Government that there be greater integration of school locations with Municipalities.” This item has a target for completion of 2020 in the Strategic Plan. Through its membership in the CSA, Zorra has successfully advocated for a Province-wide moratorium on school closures, and additional funding recognizing the unique value of rural and northern schools to their community (RNEF). With respect to the Ministry of Education and School Boards there have been several relevant developments.

1. Integrated Local Planning (Ministry of Education, 2018)

Throughout our public consultations, the ministry also heard about the need to strengthen integrated local planning at the community level and to promote local planning conversations among school boards, municipalities, and other relevant local partners. There will be a call for proposals this summer, seeking approximately three communities across Ontario to participate in VIPPI. These communities will represent a mix of urban, rural, Northern and Francophone communities. Each community must identify partners to participate in a local integrated planning table that should include, at a minimum, school boards and municipalities and relevant local partners that reflect each area's unique needs. The ministry will provide a facilitator to lead a series of sessions spanning approximately one year. The goal of VIPPI is for all members involved to share and discuss capital and community planning processes and relevant data to create a collection of best practices.

2. Draft Revised Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline and Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline Updates Date: February 18, 2018

The current requirement for school boards to consider community impacts, such as loss or gain of community use of school space, will be maintained and extended to include consideration of any possible impacts on First Nation communities’ on-reserve. If at least one school that is eligible to receive support from the Rural and Northern Education Fund (RNEF) is included in a pupil accommodation review at any time, then economic impacts must also be given consideration for each accommodation option. School boards will have discretion to undertake economic impact assessments in other communities, if needed. The ministry will: Develop guidance that will define key parameters it expects the economic impact assessment to address (such as, impact on local businesses, impact on family commutes / schedules and housing starts). We will consult with school boards and municipalities on how these key parameters are shaped; Develop an approved list of vendors from which boards may select a third party to undertake this work. Seek approval for additional funding for boards that will be required to undertake economic impact assessments.

3. Updates on Integrated Local Planning and the Community Planning and Partnerships Guideline (CPPG)

The ministry remains committed to updating the CPPG to further encourage joint responsibility for integrated community planning as we learn more from the new voluntary pilot program and other work across government. This decision was based on consultation feedback, which suggested that adding new requirements on school boards through the CPPG in an attempt to compel local partnerships is unlikely to be successful. Instead, the ministry plans to work with the Ministries of Infrastructure and Municipal Affairs to:

- Develop a new voluntary pilot program that will provide flexible support to municipalities, school boards, and other relevant local actors who wish to enhance their collective capacity for integrated local planning. Best practices and lessons learned will inform future policy and supports for integrated local planning across the province.

At its September 28th meeting the Thames Valley District School Board's (TVDSB) Rural Education Task Force (RETF) passed the following: That the Board of Trustees advocate for the following and invite the Rural Education Task Force municipal members to advocate similarly: Maintaining and enhancing the Rural and Northern Education Fund (RNEF) funding model for rural and northern schools, with possible reallocation of Grants for Student Needs (GSNs) to support a net funding neutral increase in the RNEF. Maintaining the moratorium on school consolidations and closures for the schools that qualify/ identified for the Rural and Northern Education Fund. Strengthening of integrated local planning at the community level and to promote local planning conversations among school boards, municipalities, and other relevant local partners to ensure ongoing communication and notification regarding possible school consolidations, closures, additions or new builds. Provincial policies for capacity planning and pupil accommodation reviews that formally recognize the importance and value to the community of rural and single school community schools. This will be considered by the Board at its October 13th meeting.

4. At its September 28, 2020 meeting, the Thames Valley District School Board of Trustees passed the following:

1. That the Rural Education Task Force Committee be provided an extension to 2021 November 23.
2. That the Board of Trustees advocate for the following and invite the Rural Education Task Force municipal members to advocate similarly:
 - a. Maintaining and enhancing the Rural and Northern Education Fund (RNEF) funding model for rural and northern schools.
 - b. Maintaining the moratorium on school consolidations and closures for the schools that qualify/identified for the Rural and Northern Education Fund, in accordance with the Ministry of Education Draft Public Accommodation Guidelines.
 - c. Strengthening of integrated local planning at the community level and to promote local planning conversations among school boards, municipalities and other relevant local partners to ensure ongoing communication and notification regarding possible school consolidations, closures, additions or new builds.
 - d. Provincial policies for capacity planning and pupil accommodation reviews that formally recognize the importance and value to the community of rural and single school community schools.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Continue school retention strategy by advocating with Oxford County Planning that schools are an integral part of the Planning Process and should be reflected in the County Strategic Plan and Official Plan, and lobbying the Provincial Government that there be greater integration of school locations with Municipalities.

Goal: We are a *vibrant* community that values our uniqueness, creativity and takes pride in calling Zorra home.

Action: Supporting our community, events and celebrations Developing safe, liveable communities.