

2011 ARC in Park Royal (Clarkson) and Erin Mills (Erindale)

As a member of the Park Royal community, I was actively involved throughout 2011 in trying to review the ARC deliberations and provide relevant input. Many years ago I was a parent representative on an ARC in Park Royal chaired by former Peel Board chairman Bill Kent.

1. Issue - ARC Process and Number of School Closures.

Although many ARC members have conscientiously spent a lot of personal time on the current ARC, there is an underlying concern that, where the rubber hits the road, the process has been too insular and inappropriately biased towards the Peel Board's objective of maximizing the number of school closures.

It is quite notable that the current ARC has proposed the elimination of five out of ten schools. The number of closures seems excessive, without effective supporting documentation, and based primarily on an adversarial, non-representative voting process rather than on a comparative analysis of what would be considered a viable alternative to the ARC recommendations.

The primary reason given in the Board Staff report for supporting the ARC recommendation is the extent to which the capacity to accommodate students has been reduced. The focus is on maximizing the number of school closures.

2. Issue - ARC Structure and Voting Process.

The current ARC involves two disparate communities with no interdependence once it was established that Erin Mills students would no longer be bussed into the Park Royal community (there had been only one, rejected, scenario that had contemplated such ongoing bussing).

The wide scope of the ARC, covering these two communities, seems to have undermined the objective of effectively analyzing alternatives, resulting in the use of a biased adversarial voting process to determine the number of school closures.

The ARC process involved 15 Erin Mills parent/community reps and 7 Park Royal parent/community reps, along with school principals and various other board representatives.

Accordingly, setting aside the issue of principals outvoting parents on how many schools to recommend for closure within a school community, it seems fundamentally wrong to have allowed Erin Mills parents to override the votes of Park Royal parents in determining how many schools to recommend for closure in Park Royal, or vice versa to have Park Royal parents potentially biasing the vote on which schools to close in Erin Mills, particularly when there was no longer any interdependence between the two school communities.

On June 1, the trustee and the ARC Chair required each member to rank the scenarios on a scale of 1-5 and then they "interpreted" the aggregate ranking results as a vote to eliminate all scenarios that did not close at least two schools in each community, and essentially at least three schools in Erin Mills.

3. Issue - Misrepresenting Community Preferences.

After a four-month break, a final ARC vote was taken Sept 14, but immediately prior to the voting the ARC Chair misinformed the ARC that a 4,000 person survey had been carried out in the Park Royal community, with a very low survey response rate and with the conclusion that the "community preference was for two schools to close". No such community survey took place and the ARC Chair's assertion regarding a community preference to close two schools was groundless. The ARC chair has refused to insert on the Board website a correction to the assertion that such a survey took place, and when parents at the Oct 4 public meeting commented that they had not seen such a survey, neither the trustee nor the ARC chair disclosed the fact that no such survey took place (when I had the opportunity to speak at the meeting I told the attendees there was no such survey and the ARC chair and trustee were aware there was no such survey).

This misrepresentation occurred subsequent to the Trustees involvement in the undermining of arrangements for an Aug 3 community meeting in Park Royal to encourage the identification of a viable scenario closing only one school in Park Royal.

4. Issue - Financial Accountability.

How and when will the financial results from the school closures be determined and communicated, so as to explicitly identify the amounts and where the funds (and land) arising from the closure are expected to be allocated, and whether these school communities have been marginalized for other budgetary reasons.

5. Issue - Trustees Prohibit Identifying/Analyzing Viable Alternative

First let me express my personal view that **IF** two out of the three schools were to be closed in Park Royal, then I would agree that retaining the central location of Hillside for the remaining school is the fairest approach, particularly if sufficient land can be secured to allow appropriate site renovations.

But what the ARC has **not** done, with regards to the interests of the community, is identify and comparatively evaluate what would be considered a viable alternative to closing two out of three schools in Park Royal, or in the case of Erin Mills, a viable alternative to closing three out of seven schools.

In fact, my understanding is that the trustees prohibit ARC members from making such a determination and are not supportive of community efforts to establish such an identification. Such a biased constraint seems illegitimate for the ARC process.

Furthermore, the explicit intention of the trustee was that the single-scenario recommendation from the ARC would be the same as the subsequent single-scenario recommendation from the Board staff, which it was.

Attachments

1. Rejection Criteria in Final ARC Report (Oct 14 2011)

Adversarial, non-representative voting appears to have taken place without establishing appropriate supporting analysis and documentation. The final ARC report provides only cursory justification for the elimination of scenarios and no comparative analysis relative to a viable alternative to maximizing school closures.

- The rejection criteria are simplistic and generally non-specific.
- No comparison analysis based on the relative advantages and disadvantages of a specific viable alternative.

2. Valuation checklist.

- reorganizing the checklist provides more meaningful insights.
- list does not support assertion regarding relative priorities for stakeholders
- nonsensical that each of the twenty items would get same 5% weighting
- poor comparative analysis structure puts reliance on post-vote rationalizations

3. Erin Mills closure scenarios

- Reflecting the bias of the Peel Board to maximize school closures, the ARC review included nine distinct scenarios absurdly looking at closing 4 out of 7 schools in Erin Mills, and yet for scenarios closing two schools, consideration was given to closing only two specific schools (with one exception).
- Provides summary structure that ARC declined to provide to community
- Sorted by # of school closures
- Commentary highlights biases toward maximizing number of schools closed

Attachments and PowerPoint sent by email prior to meeting:

"ARCs' Oct 14 2011 report - valn checklist rejection criteria - for 2012-01-24 Peel Board meeting.pdf"

"ARC Valuation Checklist perspective - for 2012-01-24.pdf"

"Erindale school closure scenarios - for 2012-01-24 board meeting.pdf"

Addendum PRCA newsletter comments regarding request for non-specific community feedback on ARC (no survey questions distributed to community nor to PRCA members; refusal to provide copy of report given to ARC). There were only ~200 PRCA members and I am one of them.: "We are eager for your opinion; however, only comments from PRCA members will be included in a report to the ARC. Therefore, become a PRCA member and add your voice to this issue."