

JOHN RINGEREIDE

The Case for Keeping Thomas A. Stewart S.S. Open
By T. John Ringereide, retired former Principal of TAS

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen
and Members of the Accommodation Committee,

My name is Trygve John Ringereide and I am a retired Principal from Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board. During my administrative career I served as Vice Principal at Campbellford D.H.S. and at Courtice High School and was Principal of Thomas A. Stewart Secondary School and then Kenner Collegiate and Intermediate School until my retirement on June 30th, 2010.

The purpose of this presentation is very simple and that is to offer my reflections and insights into the facilities of Thomas A. Stewart S.S., a topic I am very familiar with. I am not here to draw comparisons or to debate the relative merits of the various schools represented here. That is the sole responsibility and purpose of the Committee.

During my tenure as Principal from 2004 to 2008, I was intimately involved in the renovations that were conducted as the result of Ministry funding at that time.

These major renovations were conducted in 2006 and involved the complete refurbishment of the air conditioning and heating systems, the roof and numerous external doors and windows. New lockers were also installed as were new toilet facilities, including several wheel chair accessible units. TAS does not have elevators but it does have several

lift devices for use by students using wheelchairs.

Fully equipped shops are in place for Auto, Manufacturing, Welding, and Construction Technology has 2 shops available for instruction. An excellent greenhouse exists for the Horticulture program, with several improvements having been undertaken, such as new heaters, a new roof and a new sprinkler system, all made possible through funds from the Ministry through the SHSM program.

To this list must be added first rate facilities for Foods and Hospitality. In Special Education, there are 4 excellent LLS classrooms. Thomas A. Stewart is also home to the STRIVE program in the North Wing with superb, separate facilities for instruction and food preparation.

At TAS, a fully equipped Computer Science lab is available to students as are several fully equipped science labs. The school has 2 gymnasiums for athletic programming, and does not need to use either of these for arts programming.

The auditorium is an excellent facility for concerts and dramatic productions, as the acoustics are first rate. The sound and lighting systems were fully upgraded during my time at Thomas A. Stewart. The stage area is large and there is ample space available in the spacious room adjacent to the stage for dressing, props, etc. TAS's nationally recognized, outstanding instrumental music program uses this facility regularly for concerts as do several community musical organizations such as the Peterborough Singers and their School Outreach Program, the Peterborough Youth Symphony for their Youth Outreach Concerts and the annual Kiwanis Festival.

As well, there is a very fine drama room, fully equipped with lights.

It is clear , therefore, that Thomas A. Stewart is an excellent facility with recently replaced and upgraded equipment. It must be noted and recorded that several million dollars were invested in TAS only a few years ago.

The second point I wish to raise, and which I feel is very important to this discussion, is the capacity that Thomas A Stewart has for an increase in enrollment at very low cost and without the need for further refurbishment. The actual capacity of Thomas A. Stewart is approximately 1600.

TAS has numerous class rooms that have been closed and sealed off, as the enrollment has gradually decreased.

When I entered as Principal in 2004 our enrollment was in the high 1100's. Four years later when I was transferred to Kenner, it was still in the mid 900's, but the process of reducing space had already begun. During my tenure, several classrooms on the first floor of the North Wing were closed and I understand that all the classrooms in the upper floor of the South Wing are now closed. We are talking about the immediate availability of 10 - 12 classrooms if required. The spaces that have been closed are large, outstanding classrooms, especially those in the upper level of the South Wing, which have a commanding view of the Otonabee River and the beautiful campus, which I wish to speak about in a moment.

I am pleased to note that my successor, Annie Johnston, has

presided over a large increase in the number of Smartboards and that the school now has 26 such valuable devices installed and available for student learning in its classrooms today.

One of the advantages of TAS from the point of view of a Principal is that its more isolated location and exceptional campus lends itself to students remaining on school property during the lunch hour. When I was Principal, most of our students used the Cafeteria services at the school and I understand that this practice still continues and is likely to continue to do so. During my time as Principal I had several discussions with Facilities Services and my Superintendents, respectively Sherry Summersides and Reet Patterson, about the feasibility and cost of reopening the second cafeteria in the event that students from other schools might be sent to TAS . At that time, my understanding was that the ovens and warming equipment could be refurbished and made fully operational, once again, for \$ 20,000 or less. The dish washing equipment has not been used for years and is not repairable but this is not a factor as the modern cafeteria no longer uses the dishes and cutlery that were originally used in 1968. The equipment could be removed and the metal sold, which might create more space in the food preparation and storage area.

The specialized spaces already noted for use in the Arts, Special Education, Technology and Sports are outstanding at TAS and can easily be expanded. It should be noted that

these programs have flourished at Thomas A. Stewart for a number of years. Additional quality space is certainly available for Technology and the Arts. Two fully equipped shops can be reopened and Room 66, the large room next to the Auditorium which has been mentioned already, and which was reopened during my tenure, could be used more fully for Arts programming. At the time I was transferred, I was planning on building additional practice space there and this can still be done at modest cost.

The availability of excellent facilities and space at very low cost, therefore, concludes my second reason for keeping Thomas A. Stewart open.

I now come to my final point. As an educator and former Principal, I must direct your attention to the extraordinary campus of Thomas A. Stewart. This feature may seem obvious, as it is one of largest high school campuses in Ontario and boasts numerous playing fields and easy access to the river and its environs. Thomas A. Stewart is located right on the Rotary Trail. It even has a beach volleyball court and 2 tennis courts as well as a dug out.

As a recreational space during breaks, such as lunch hour, and as instructional space in the areas of Athletics, Technology (Horticulture), Outdoor Education and Science, the campus of this school is without compare. The effect that the environment has on students cannot be underestimated. The availability of excellent facilities and open and inviting spaces, both inside and out, is of great

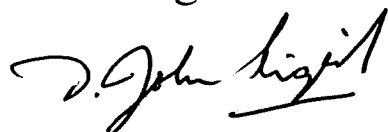
importance to learning. Our students deserve the very best facilities that we can offer them in their learning and Thomas A. Stewart provides that.

Finally, it must be stated clearly that one of the things that I was most proud of as Principal of Thomas A. Stewart, was its open and inclusive culture. We looked out for each other and respected our differences. Every person was valued and no one was excluded. Amigos has been an important part of life at Thomas A. Stewart since its inception and indeed, Heads Up for Inclusion was the brain child of Lucinda Hage whose son, Paul attended and graduated from the excellent Learning and Life Skills program there. I am certain that any new students and staff coming to TAS would be well received and greeted with open arms.

When we had the 40th reunion in 2008, it was clear how much Thomas A. Stewart Secondary School meant not only to its alumni, students and faculty, but to the Community at large. It is a remarkable school and it is my hope that given the advantages that it offers, that it continue for many years to come.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
T. John Ringereide



May 12, 2011.