



**Name: Cameron Ketchum**

**Summary of main points for the issue/ concern:**

On behalf of the Parent Council at W.E.Gowling Public School in the Carlington neighbourhood, this delegation will highlight concerns around the removal of our school's playground infrastructure, including:

- Heavy reliance on community fundraising to replace playground resources.
- Absence of clear and equitable Board strategies for replacing critical infrastructure when they reach the end of their lifecycle, especially for schools in more marginalized communities and with limited fundraising potential.
- Limited Board capacity to support volunteer Parent Council leadership, including endorsing critical grant applications, a commitment to substantive co-planning/co-funding, and open lines of communication around purchasing, logistics, project delays, and overall problem solving.
- Resistance to exploring options for substantive in-kind community contributions to make these projects more feasible and timely.

**Context and Background:**

WE Gowling's kinder yard playground has been removed already and its junior structure will be removed within two years. The cost to place both will be approximately \$300,000. The Parent Council has been fundraising for the anticipated replacement of the kinder structure for almost 10 years and has raised about \$100,000 to put towards this project (while also fundraising for a range of other school resources over the years). The need to remove the second structure was only made clear this year and fundraising to replace it in time is not possible.

While the kinder yard was scheduled to be replaced this summer, the project has been delayed for at least one year due to parts not being available (although we are not clear whether there are options available to alter designs based on what is available).

**Recommendation(s) for resolution of issue:**

The Parent Council at WE Gowling Public School is making this delegation both to encourage greater support for this project (including speeding up the replacement process) and to advocate for enhanced processes, planning and clarity at the Board level, so all schools can have greater confidence that there are equitable standards in place, and greater clarity on timelines, Board capacity to support and partner with Parent Councils on the solutions, resources and effort required to address these challenges.

Our recommendations to resolve these structural challenges are as follows:

- Greater Transparency
- Detailed insights into how and why delays are occurring and how we can work together to mitigate them.

- Full clarity on the processes required to address playground infrastructure issues most effectively and what support is available through the OCDSB.
- Detailed answers to our specific questions submitted to the Facilities Dept around delays to the kinder playground installation.
- Greater Accountability
- Commitment to work more closely with Parent Councils on clear timelines, funding opportunities and problem-solving.
- Clarity on successful precedents and/or new and creative approaches available to schools/Parent Councils that would align with OCDSB requirements.
- Willingness to engage in an ongoing conversation around how Parent Councils and communities/neighbourhoods can be more engaged in playground/campus redevelopment.

These objectives are grounded in the critical equity issues at play when it comes to resourcing infrastructure renewal for public schools in general (source-<https://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/rich-school-poor-school>).

The challenge we are facing is clear example of structural/systems issues working against schools like ours in achieving our goals in a realistic way. We are prepared to be creative and ambitious but need a similar willingness from the OCDSB to explore options and opportunities, which may also bring about scalable solutions for other schools.