

Name: Nichole Nancekivell

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

Members of the Board,

Although we have been given yet another tentative move-in date for Maplewood Secondary School, a number of questions and concerns remain in regard to how this project was handled and how the same mistakes will be avoided in the future. As everyone in this room should be aware, this is a facility that the community has been advocating for for more than 20 years. Despite the ongoing pleas for a public high school in what has been identified as the fastest growing development area in the city of Ottawa, it took the Board and Province until 2018 to agree on funding - 18 years after the opening of it's Catholic counterpart. During the ground breaking ceremony in April 2021, the community was informed that the school would be open to students in September 2023. In the fall of 2022, affected families were informed that, due to lingering impacts of COVID-19 on the supply chain and recent labour disputes, the school opening would be delayed until 2024; a disappointing but believable piece of news from the Board.

From that point on, however, we as parents and stakeholders have been continuously misled about the status of the project. As the community sat back and watched the slow progress being made onsite and questioned the validity of a September opening, all communication coming from the feeder schools, the administration at Maplewood (both via information sessions as well as email updates), and the Board maintained their confidence in a timely completion. Even after announcing in June that the gym would not be accessible and the cafeteria, although available as a common place to eat, would not be ready to serve food for the 2024/25 school year, updates from Maplewood and the Board continued to tow the line that the school would be welcoming students for the first day of school. Communiqués boasted about the work being done to determine school colours and a mascot, the completion of the school's football field and the status of classrooms time and time again. Never once were obvious issues, such as the missing windows, addressed nor was a plan shared as to how students would be delivered physical education classes later in the year when going outside was no longer as option.

Frustrated by the lack of information being provided and being able to quite clearly see that there were significant issues with the build, parents took it upon themselves to investigate the progress by probing workers onsite and peering in windows. Only by doing so were honest expectations being delivered. Parents were informed that the fire alarm had been wrongfully engineered, geotechnical issues were

somehow unexpectedly encountered which required foundation repairs to be undertaken and structural aspects of the interior stairwells still required an engineer's stamp of approval.

In addition, it wasn't until a rumor surfaced that the OCDSB had spent \$500,000 to have additional portables installed at South Carleton as a contingency plan that our concerns were addressed for the first time. However, despite being given the opportunity to be open and honest with the community, the Board chose to continue the narrative that the school would be ready on time and that the portables were decided upon in the Spring as a back up plan for "significant construction delays". Delays which they claimed on July 26th to not be a concern and were "confident" Maplewood would be welcoming students in 5 weeks time. Let's not forget that the school, when first delayed, was slated to be completed by Spring 2024. The fact that a contingency plan was developed at this time should have been communicated to parents as it indicated delays were already being experienced.

Despite families emailing their Trustee and other Board officials begging for an honest update on Maplewood's progress, this is what we were offered after July 26th :

- August 16th , two weeks out from the first day of school, we were again assured that the school would be ready and provided the same "update" as in June and July: football field looks great, cafeteria will not be serving food, classrooms are ready for students.

- August 23rd , a new contingency plan was introduced that did not include any mention of the portables that had been delivered to South Carleton. Instead, families were advised that 7/8s would be attending DA Moodie and be provided uninterupted bus service while the grade 9s would be left at home to learn virtually. NO explanation was given as to why the contingency plan was changed nor was any realistic messaging provided. A Board that had not been transparent in away way leading up to this point then stated they were offering this information to "remain transparent".

- August 28th at 4:16pm, news broke that the contingency plan, which the Board insisted would not be needed was in fact being activated leaving families and presumably staff with less than two working days before a long weekend to adjust. Classes were to begin Tuesday at 8am yet Chromebooks were not being offered until 8:30am for those in need.

When pressed for more answers by parents and the news media, all we were left with was, "the fire alarm doesn't work", yet no firm end date to the contingency plan could be provided.

Although it is too late to rectify what has transpired with the opening of Maplewood, the community at large would like to know what measures the Board will put in pace to ensure future neighbourhoods do not experience the same. Has Tambro Construction Inc. been fined? Will they be barred from future

Delegation

OCDSB projects? What actions have been taken against the project manager? The responsible party needs to be identified and held accountable for this poorly executed development. The fact that the Board continued to take Tambro's word on the opening date despite the condition of Maplewood in the weeks and months leading up to September 3rd needs to also be reviewed and reflected upon.

In the same amount of time it has taken Maplewood to get to this point, Stittsville OCDSB families have had to sit back and watch other school boards construct two fully functioning schools that have been welcoming students for at least two school years in the same neighbourhood. Meanwhile Maplewood remains an active construction zone which, at times, appeared to have no one on site for weeks at a time. Not to mention the numerous other OCDSB projects that have been taken on in the past 5 years and either opened as planned or had contingency plans communicated and implemented months in advance (Shingwàkons families were advised in June of 2022 that they would not be onsite for September).

The impact that the your failings have had on the families of Maplewood are sprawling. This cohort of students has experienced educational turmoil for the past 6 years for a variety of reasons. First there were the rolling teacher strikes which saw them in and out of the classroom for months before eventually being locked out on and off for years due to COVID-19. Maplewood's delayed opening now has these same students catching busses as early as 6:55am to receive instruction at D.A Moodie or experience their first few weeks of high school isolated in their rooms staring at screen of profile pictures rather than peers. The narrative online is that adversity builds character and that our children are more resilient than we give them credit for. Although this is true for most, at what point are we no longer teaching our children resiliency but rather complacency? As tax paying stakeholders, we deserve

more answers and reassurance as to how the Board, an organization we are asked to trust our children's futures with, will do better for future communities and ensure that Maplewood is complete – in full – in a more timely manner.

Sincerely,
Nichole Nancekivell