



Name: Elizabeth MacDonald

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

Representing current and future parents of Woodroffe Avenue Public School and the Carlingwood neighbourhood.

I represent a group of concerned parents and community members who are opposed to the changes to the attendance boundaries and grade configurations proposed for Woodroffe Avenue Public School. For the Carlingwood and Woodpark communities, these changes DIRECTLY OPPOSE the stated aims of the program review to emphasize walkable, community schools and create fewer transitions to new schools for students. The current proposal will remove children from JK to Grade 3 from their siblings, their neighbourhood and their community school. The youngest children will be sent over 3km away to Regina street, which is in many cases, the FIFTH farthest OCDSB school from their home. Access to Regina Street from the Carlingwood and Woodpark neighbourhoods is only possible via Carling avenue and Richmond Road/Byron Avenue, which have heavy vehicle traffic and are non-residential as well as being major construction sites for decades to come, with the planned intensification of these areas. Bussing in the OCDSB is known to be expensive, unsafe, and unreliable. For families without personal vehicles, this means a long and dangerous walk with your children along sidewalks that are often impassable in winter or a long, circuitous and expensive trip on public transit. The walk to school would take my family OVER AN HOUR each way. Many of us will have multiple children at different schools and the inability to perform unified pick up and drop offs will create a logistical nightmare for families. This will be further compounded for low income families, completely abolishing your equity oriented objectives.

Imagine a single mother who now needs to drop one child off at Woodroffe Avenue



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Public School, get another child to Regina, and still get downtown by transit on time to get to work. She can't meet the bus at the end of the day, because she couldn't even start her job until after 9am. So, she'll be walking or bussing in the dark to pick up 2 children from 2 different schools, somehow all before 6pm when EDP ends, despite being downtown until at least 5:15pm to complete her workday, with a 45 minute train ride (on a good day). HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE? Do they expect us to revert back to a world in which women can't work just so we can pick up our children from school?

We are outraged about how these changes will impact the Carlingwood and Woodpark community. We are absolutely supportive of the notion of community schools, in principle. But, if approved as is, the proposed changes mean Carlingwood effectively loses its Kindergarten to Grade 8 community French immersion school: Woodroffe Ave Public School.

While the goals are good, the plan is clearly and undeniably disconnected from the stated goals. The proposed changes would mean that kids in Carlingwood JK to Grade 3 will be forced to travel to a school (Regina) – up to 3km away, for some in the neighbourhood - which is further away than 4 other nearby OCDSB community schools: Broadview (850 m); Churchill (2.4 km); D Roy Kennedy (1.9km); former Woodroffe elementary PS (200 M). This makes no sense. “Community schooling” should not mean taking away a 350m commute from my 5 year old, to now having to travel about 30 minutes each way to and from school (only if I put her in a stroller at age 5 - imagine a 5 year walking 3km each way!). From an administrative perspective, it makes no sense. The proposal would result in significant overcapacity at Regina and Severn; while under capacity everywhere else. The proposal plans to bring Regina’s attendance to 125% capacity (about 75 students over), and Severn to 116% capacity (60 students over). While surrounding schools will mostly see their capacity drop and will be under capacity : Devenshire (66% of full capacity); Connaught (80% of full capacity); Elmdale (67%); Hilson (95%); Churchill (63%); Broadview (92%); Woodroffe (77%); D. Roy Kennedy (67%); Briargreen (70%); Lakeview (66%). This



proposal will force us to consider another school board and/or to move.

We specifically chose this neighbourhood because of its accessibility to two fantastic, top-rated schools – Woodroffe (JK-8 FI) and Broadview (JK-8 English). There are so many other better solutions: - Woodroffe has existing infrastructure (Kindergarten wing), administration, teaching staff, etc. to keep it JK-8 for French Immersion. Our ideal solution would be to keep our community school at Woodroffe for JK-8 French Immersion. It's perfectly set up for this and would be minimally disruptive to the community, the students and the school administration. If keeping Woodroffe whole is absolutely not an option, there are so many more logical options than the proposal to cram children into Severn and Regina, while there is undercapacity elsewhere at schools that are CLOSER to Carlingwood. This frankly makes no logical sense – unless there are other factors at play that the school board is not being forthcoming or transparent about.

The process has been poorly mismanaged and true motivations of the changes are not being transparently communicated. We understand that even the publicly elected school board Trustees received the boundary changes only days ago. If true, this would mean these details are tightly controlled and managed by non-elected senior executives at OCDSB. Engagement has been not-transparent and unhelpful to date (e.g., boundary changes withheld until late in the process). These changes took the community by complete surprise. There is no public, transparent justification for these seemingly illogical decisions that are contradictory to the stated objectives of a community school". The full range of motivations behind these changes are likely not being transparently communicated to citizens of Ottawa.

Carlingwood students at Woodroffe community public school should not be a casualty of longstanding funding issues. This is unacceptable for a decision that has such far-reaching implications for the citizens of Ottawa – both those with children in OCDSB, but also the home owners of Carlingwood (and surely other neighbourhoods) where these types of decisions have material impacts on home values.



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We urge you to reconsider the changes at Woodroffe Ave Public School. Our ideal solution would be to maintain Woodroffe as a JK-8 French Immersion. But, in the absence of this – Carlingwood must not be forgotten. Carlingwood currently has a choice between both Woodroffe AND Broadview – two of the best schools in Ottawa. Without Woodroffe as JK-8, Broadview should now be the true “community school” for Carlingwood under the proposed changes (850 meters away). Moreover, there is plenty of spare capacity between Broadview, Churchill, Hilson, Elmdale, and Connaught to accommodate this.

The entire small community of Carlingwood is galvanizing in an unprecedented way – not just those directly impacted, but all those in the community. While we can thank you for bringing our community even closer together – I cannot say its under the best circumstances. We will continue to fight this, with our advocacy, our voices, our emails, our votes, including on Sundays at 1 am, because we are busy, hard working parents with jobs and young children.

Thank you,

Elizabeth MacDonald