OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Delegation 6.15.a

Name: Jesse Cressman-Dickinson

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

In response to the OCDSB EPR we ask that our trustees say no to the boundary proposal as drafted and call for a more thoughtful approach to these boundary changes, including:

- Meaningful consultation with families, over a longer period of time to shape the boundary proposal
- A transparent and costed transition plan that puts students first
- A grandparenting policy that minimizes disruption

For over a year, families have been hearing about the elementary program review. We have been told these changes will help more kids access French Immersion in their community. This was a theory that parents could get behind, we want enhanced program offerings for all communities.

This dream of community-based learning was shattered when families saw the boundary review and found that for many, this actually meant traveling further to access French Immersion, separating siblings and a host of other significant challenges.

As a parent of three kids at Connaught Public School, it means traveling more than double the distance and almost walking right past our school to get to the new one - I can't make that make sense.

I support the stated intention of the review. I also understand the challenge our board faces with over and under utilization in our schools. However, I don't have faith that the plan as presented will deliver on either of these things, and as a result I encourage trustees to vote no.

The current plan is flawed.

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1. Despite the sweeping scale of these changes, families and other stakeholders only have a month to review the proposal and provide feedback prior to the Board vote.
2. The proposal does not define the problem it seeks to solve or provide success metrics. There has been no transparency on how the new boundaries were drawn or confirmation there will be the staffing and financial resources to support special education or learners who have thrived in the alternative education model. Families are questioning what success looks like and don't have confidence in successful outcomes as a result.
3. For Connaught specifically, the proposed English and French boundaries differ and therefore go against the stated goal of aligning boundaries. The proposed boundaries require many children to travel further to access French Immersion, putting some in the position of having to abandon French Immersion to attend a school closer to home.

Given these flaw, I'm asking my trustees, and all trustees in Ottawa say no to the boundary proposal as drafted and recommend:

1. More time is given to enable transparent decision making and meaningful consultation with communities, planners and decision makers before any vote on approval.

OCDSB trustees should direct staff to provide a publicly available and detailed report and transparent transition plan, outlining costs and solutions.

Without the evidence, we're moving problems. Families are still traveling further to access French Immersion. And as we heard on CBC recently, even with this overhaul, the OCDSB

would still have some 30 schools over capacity and more than a dozen underutilized schools with under 60% Utilization Factor.

2. Through recommendation one, the proposed boundaries are redrafted and the plan revisited, keeping more kids in their neighbourhoods in the true spirit of community-based education, and we can be certain the resources are in place to deliver the educational programming our kids deserve.

If the goal of the EPR is truly to support community-based learning with program availability, the boundaries need to reflect this, for Connaught and for everyone.

I encourage you to listen to the voices of parents that don't see the evidence that this plan will deliver and instead are raising legitimate concerns about the impacts including:

- Degraded learning environments based on research that shows that inclusion of children with specialized needs, without requisite support, leads to increased educator burden and poor outcomes for the whole class
- Having to send siblings to different schools, the anxiety that this will create for children and the pickup/drop off logistical nightmare this creates, forcing some parents (read: moms) out of the workforce
- Safety, as many kids will need to travel further crossing major arterial roads
- Complete loss of trust with the OCDSB as a result of this rushed process, with few details, that contradicts the Board's commitment to good governance, transparency, and responsible decision-making.

3. If the plan is adopted as presented, impacted families should be grandparented to ensure stability for kids and families.

For Connaught, the school is currently only at 92% utilization factor. The EPR would drop this to 82%. There is ample room for existing students to stay with their peers at Connaught.

Moving kids unnecessarily disrupts education, friendships, social networks, childcare, transportation and the stability of their learning environments. The changes place unnecessary stress and anxiety on our kids.

This plan does less, it's rushing disruptive changes that don't appear to offer lasting solutions.

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We don't want a plan that does less, better.

We need a plan that puts kids first, strengthens communities, and builds trust in the school board.