

Name: Pamela Byrne

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

On behalf of many parents in the Briar Green, Trend Arlington, Craig Henry, Knoxdale and Manordale area.

Many children already have communities within their schools and uprooting them would be detrimental to their wellbeing. Our children have had their homes destroyed by the tornado, trees uprooted from the derecho, have gone through COVID and many other situations that have left their entire worlds changed and instability in their lives. Forcing them to move schools when they have finally established some sense of normalcy would be absolutely terrible for them.

Furthermore, the new boundary change also increases commutes especially for the Criag Henry and Centrepointe folks that are being moved either to Manordale (Craig Henry) or Briar Green (Centrepointe). Those in Centrepointe will see their drive to pick up their children increase from a jaunt down Woodroffe to a loop down baseline and up greenbank. Those in Craig Henry will see a quick walk of 300m to school increase to a 2km walk for these small children.

Changing these boundaries seems nonsensical especially when the projected capacity of Knoxdale will decrease to 60% while increasing those of Manordale and Briar Green well above capacity. These changes will also affect families who have children enrolled in daycares close to their siblings school which will further impact their family life as a whole. Our community has also voiced concern about the changes to the program itself with it potentially watering down French immersion. As you are probably well aware, French can be an advantage for job opportunities especially here in the Ottawa area.



We are also concerned about the abolition of the PSN program within OCDSB schools. As a special needs teacher at the high school level, I appreciate these programs for how well they serve students that are unable to learn at their grade level. These programs provide kids with developmental disabilities the opportunity to learn skills at their pace and level, many of which will only be able to learn life skills.

Cancelling these programs is detrimental to their wellbeing and their ability to become contributing members of society.

Subject: Opposition to Proposed School Boundary Changes Affecting Knoxdale, Manordale, and Briargreen Communities

Dear Members of the School Board,

We are writing to express our profound concern and strong opposition to the proposed boundary changes affecting the Knoxdale, Manordale, and Briargreen school communities. These changes threaten to disrupt well-established communities, negatively impact our children's well-being, and demonstrate a lack of sound planning and equitable decision-making.

The Knoxdale, Manordale, and Briargreen schools function as a self-contained trifecta, where boundary adjustments within this area do not create a domino effect on other schools. Knoxdale Public School, in particular, serves a unique demographic, notably supporting one of the largest Jewish communities in this area of Ottawa. This factor must be given significant weight in your deliberations.

Our communities have faced considerable challenges in recent years, including the destruction of our homes as a result of the 2018 tornado, the COVID-19 pandemic,



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and the damage to many properties in the 2022 derecho storm. These events have tested the resilience of our families and children. It is unreasonable to expect them to endure further upheaval caused by unnecessary school transitions. The closure of Leslie Park Public School in 2018, which resulted in transitions to Briargreen and Knoxdale, was justified by the OCDSB as a measure to "reduce transition for students as fewer transitions provide a better foundation for student success and well-being." This rationale directly contradicts the current proposal. Many of the families that are affected by this boundary change have already had to adjust to a school closure.

The proposed changes will also disproportionately harm the Jewish community within Craig Henry. These families have chosen their homes based on proximity to the synagogue (located in Craig Henry) and the Knoxdale Public School catchment, which hosts a weekly Jewish Cultural after-school program. This connection is integral to their cultural identity and sense of belonging. The apprehension within the Jewish community about transitioning to Manordale, where there is less familiarity and established support, is a serious concern that the Board must address. The history and intergenerational ties these families have within the Knoxdale community creates a sense of safety in times when this particular group has experienced antisemitism even within our own area. As such, this community is currently experiencing unnecessary apprehension for their safety and wellbeing with this boundary change.

Furthermore, equity concerns extend beyond cultural considerations. Manordale Public School is concerned about the potential loss of a more engaged and financially supportive section of Centreponte. The Craig Henry area has a different socioeconomic demographic, which could negatively impact fundraising opportunities and, consequently, school programs at Manordale.

The proposed changes also disregard the principle of Community Based Education, as outlined in the EPR's first goal, which emphasizes the importance of children being



able to walk to school or have a shorter commute. Children in the Craig Henry area currently enjoy a safe 200-800m walk to Knoxdale. Under the proposed changes, many of these children will face walks of up to 2.5km, potentially necessitating bus transportation. This not only increases logistical challenges for families but also undermines the goal of promoting active transportation. Families in Centrepointe also face increased traffic congestion (by way of Woodroffe, Baseline and then Greenbank) for pickups, which will impact their daily routines including daycare pickups located on Woodroffe Avenue toward Manordale Public School.

The proposed changes demonstrate a lack of foresight in addressing school capacity. Both Manordale and Briargreen are projected to be over capacity, with Manordale currently utilizing a portable and facing the need for more. Knoxdale, on the other hand, will be under capacity (from 68% to 61%) and well-equipped with two gymnasiums and no portables. The EPR report identifies the "ideal school capacity" to be between 70-99% with the goal of reducing portables. This plan contradicts that goal.

Finally, the demographic characteristics of the Manordale and Craig Henry communities warrant consideration. Given the prevalence of original homeowners, a natural demographic shift is anticipated within the next five to ten years. Additionally, the planned Light Rail Transit station at Knoxdale and Woodroffe will likely stimulate community intensification, leading to a potential increase in the Manordale Public School population. The plan's apparent failure to adequately account for these foreseeable demographic changes and the impact of the LRT station raises concerns regarding its long-term viability

We urge the school board to reconsider this boundary change and maintain the current school catchments for Craig Henry and Centrepointe students. The disruption to students, particularly within the Jewish community, along with concerns over safety, funding equity, school capacity, and commute challenges, far outweigh any



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potential benefits of this proposed change. Stability and community continuity should be prioritized in any decision that affects our children's education and well-being.

We appreciate your attention to these concerns and respectfully ask that the board vote against the proposed boundary change.

Sincerely,

The Current Knoxdale Catchment Area Parents