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Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:

I want to propose solutions that will help protect values of public education and for the school board to remain sustainable in delivering quality education across Ottawa. I agree with the overarching goals of equitable access to French immersion and I want this proposal to succeed. Moreover, community schools are incredibly important - particularly K-6 or K-8, so that siblings can stay together and working parents (particularly working mothers) can navigate school pick-up/drop-off, while advancing their careers.

The OCDSB has incorrectly resorted to boundary changes to address a series of challenges - including funding, optimizing enrollment, availability of french teachers, student language preferences, capital repairs, among others. By doing so, the OCDSB has proposed awkward - and at times - unsafe boundaries; and proposed to dismantle strong K-6 / K-8 schools that were pillars of the community, instead bussing kids several schools away in some neighbourhoods (e.g., Carlingwood). This ultimately risks losing kids in those areas to other school boards and tearing existing communities apart.

A variety of implementation solutions - other than boundaries - should be applied to resolve complex multifaceted issues, to keep schools in the community and ensure the OCDSB's success. I want to underscore that these solutions don't need to put one neighbourhood's interests against another community's, or to put socio-economic concerns against those of gender equity concerns for working moms that are raised by the K-3 / 4-8 model. IT IS POSSIBLE to keep K-6/K-8 schools, roll out EE/FI programs equitably around the city; AND draw boundaries that make sense. I challenge the OCDSB to step up to the moment, and have a bit of creativity.

Potential solutions:

Draw boundaries that make sense, with a priority on safety and proximity. This can still meet the objective of optimizing enrollment. This review should be an opportunity to strengthen community schools and the OCDSB's desirability. The OCDSB has failed significantly here, by drawing awkward and unsafe boundaries to ensure both FI and EE students at every school starting in year one.



A gradual phase-out of old programs (e.g., schools with only EE; or only EFI); and a gradual phase-in of bilingual FI/EE for younger grades, adding a class each year. With an immediate roll-out for FI/EE across all grades, across all schools, OCDSB is forced to draw awkward boundaries to move kids across schools to fill FI or EE classes (3+). But gradual implementation would allow time for communities that have historically not had access to FI to embrace new programs offered at their school. This approach to gradually phase in/out programs may allow OCDSB to draw boundaries that make more sense.

Deviations from the standard model may be required in some neighbourhoods, particularly those that resulted in the creation of K-3 / 4-8 schools - in order to keep K-6/8 community schools (e.g., Woodroffe) and/or to keep pairings close and safe. This should be a priority, given likely gender impacts of a K-3 / 4-8 model.

Come up with creative funding solutions. For example, OCDSB could discuss re-zoning with the city to sell some of its decommissioned schools to cover budgetary issues; lobby the province for regulatory changes.

Prioritize transportation and EDP access for families most impacted, and safety of commute to school, rather than based on distance (for buses) or first-come / first serve (EDP)