



**Name: Briar Howes**

**Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:**

**Delegation submission** - Keep 8 Great - maintaining communities for kids in their final years

**Requested changes to elementary program review** - permit kids to complete their final years at their current school so long as the school offers their program!

Due to the OCDSB's program review and proposed new school boundaries, many children in their final years of elementary school will be forced to leave the only home school they have ever known. These students would be deprived of the chance to graduate and celebrate with their long-time classmates. The mental health of students would suffer for OCDSB and Ministry of Education goals that are driven by cost-savings rather than evidence-based student well-being.

For example, many children who currently attend Broadview PS would be forced to attend Fisher Park for a single year, grade 8. They will be ripped away from the only community they have known since JK to complete their final year of elementary before re-joining their colleagues in high school. Fairness and common sense should dictate that all students in the OCDSB at a school that continues to offer their program (in this case JK to grade 8) should be permitted to stay until the conclusion of the full range of available grades in the school.

We urge the OCDSB to expand the grandparent approach to allow for all students to complete their final years at their current school, so long as it continues to offer their program. Any other outcome will be deeply troubling to students, parents, and the community. Any other outcome is entirely inconsistent with the OCDSB Program Review's stated goal of "building community."

Delegation meeting, March 19<sup>th</sup> – Briar Howes

Originally accepted as virtual presentation (delegation name = “Keep 8 Great”), but requesting to change to the below written submission.

I am writing to urge you to delay the vote and revise this plan so it actually prioritizes community-based schools and respects good governance.

But first, here’s how I got here – as part of the EPR’s proposed changes, my eldest child, currently in grade 6 at Broadview Public School will have to move to a new school for a single year of grade 8, even though Broadview will continue to offer K-8 and is closer to our home. The move means he will be split from his friends and the only cohort he has known since JK. More importantly, he will be split from his younger brothers who he cares for before and after school. This means that my life as a working mom becomes more challenging as I now have to find childcare and I will have no time to be engaged and involved in either school.

When I saw this school change, I thought it must be an oversight or an error because shipping a kid to a new school for a single year before high school is completely illogical. Because this seemingly small change has a large negative impact on our family, I dug into the broader proposed changes outlined in the EPR. I quickly realized that my family’s example is just the tip of the iceberg – many of the proposed changes are illogical because the EPR process is deeply flawed.

Some of the issues, like my example, have easy solutions –

- grandparent all kids to complete their final years at their current school,
- extend grandparenting to younger pre-school siblings of currently registered students,
- prioritize K-8 schools to keep families together and build greater sense of community, and
- maintain Alternative schools and all Specialized Program Classes so families can choose their community and so students with unique and specific learning needs can be supported effectively.

Those are some of the easy fixes to the flawed EPR. But some of the issues related to the EPR are harder problems to solve because the process on which the EPR is based is mired in bad governance. The OCDSB wants to implement transformational change with



## Delegation 6.8.b

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inadequate consultation, no costing details, and no change management strategy. The OCDSB is leaving the fate of our kids to a set of Trustees who have insufficient information on which to base their decision and a questionable mandate to decide something so pivotal. And the OCDSB is doing this while ineffectively skirting around the province's Pupil Accommodation Review and moratorium on school closures.

In conclusion, I ask everyone to think back to September 2019, when another publicly funded Ottawa organization rushed to roll out its poorly costed, flawed implementation plan for OC Transpo's Light Rail Train. The fall-out from that disaster continues to haunt OC Transpo today – through public inquiries, legal action, eroded public trust, and decreasing ridership. The OCDSB cannot repeat this trainwreck with our kids. They must delay this vote and revise the EPR using evidence, parent input, and good governance.