OTTAWA-CARLETON
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

Delegation 6.15.b

Name: Anne Maffre (on behalf of the Devonshire Community Public School Parent Council)

Brief summary of issue or topic of discussion:
Submission on Elementary Review on behalf of Devonshire Community Public School Parent council and the parent community.

Chair Scott. Vice Chair Milburn and Members of the Board of Trustees,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Devonshire Community Public School families and parent council. Families from West Centretown and Hintonburg East are proud to be Devonshire Dragons. Our school has an engaged community of diverse families who walk or bike together in the morning, help each other with drop-offs and pick-ups when parents are stretched thin, and spend time after the bell at local playgrounds.

As parents who have seen the benefits of a thriving school, Devonshire parents **wholeheartedly support the principles of the Elementary Program Review (EPR),** which aim to create more inclusive programming for students and strengthen community-based learning. We want all schools to thrive. We appreciate the **OCDSB's efforts to reduce inequities in our system. But this plan, as it stands, is a one-size fits all approach that is doomed to fail.**

Fair and Thoughtful Transition

From the start, this process has lacked **transparency and genuine engagement.** Early consultations were **opaque,** asking vague, surface-level questions that gave families no real sense of what was coming. **Critical details-like sweeping school boundary changes, the elimination of important programs and the full impact on communities-were only revealed two months before the vote.** Parents were left scrambling to understand and respond to a plan that was already in motion. The EPR is going to a vote while key implementation pillars are incomplete. This is **not meaningful consultation,** and the OCDSB must do better.

In addition, the OCDSB's consultation process has **failed urban families.** There were **no sessions in the urban core-a** blatant oversight for a proposal that disproportionately impacts our neighborhoods. The meetings that did occur were **held in the farthest reaches of the suburbs**

and inaccessible by public transit. There was **no targeted outreach** to marginalized families, new Canadians, or communities that face greater barriers to engagement.

We urge the OCDSB to **delay the trustee vote and any implementation of the EPR until at least 2027** to allow for a more thorough and transparent decision-making process and consultation that takes into consideration the realities of schools and neighbourhoods in the downtown core.

Rushing this plan **erodes public trust** and goes against the board's commitment to **good governance, transparency, and responsible decision-making.** Ottawa families deserve **thoughtful, evidence-based decisions.** We need to see the data and we need to see the cost.

To make a truly informed decision ahead of any vote, trustees and the public must be provided with a detailed report outlining costs, plans, and solutions for:

- **Supporting special education students** with the resources they need to transition smoothly and safely into regular classrooms;
- **Making sure schools have the staffing and retrofitting** needed;
- Working with other levels of government to **ensure sufficient childcare capacity;**
- **Keeping school communities walkable and accessible** by fully reviewing transportation impacts of boundary changes and pedestrian safety at crossings;
- Partnering with healthcare organizations to **understand the impact of these changes on kids' and families' mental health and well-being,** particularly those most vulnerable; and
- **Conducting a gender-based analysis** to assess the disproportionate impact of these changes on women and gender-diverse caregivers.

Keep Kids in their Neighborhood

School boundaries should reflect **real communities. West Centretown and Hintonburg East are a tight-knit, engaged community.** Our kids should go to school with the same children they are growing up with-but under the EPR almost half our student body would be split into multiple neighborhoods downtown and in the Glebe. If the intention of the EPR is truly to support community-based learning, future proposed boundaries must reflect that goal.

We ask the OCDSB to redraw boundaries to **keep West Centretown and Hintonburg East students in their own community** schools-Cambridge, Devonshire and Fisher Park-and avoid

kids making busy, dangerous crossings at arterial roads like Bronson and Carling Ave. Our survey of approximately 60 Devonshire families shows that 80% currently walk or bike to school, but if EPR boundaries are implemented, 67% would cross these major intersections, only 40% would continue to walk or bike and 38% would start driving or taking the bus.

Grandparent Existing Devonshire and Fisher Park Families

We call on the OCDSB and trustees to **prioritize stability for families and put kids' well-being first** by allowing **all current Devonshire students and those graduating to Fisher Park-and their siblings-to have the choice to stay at their current schools.**

Moving students unnecessarily disrupts almost every aspect of family life, including friendships, support networks, childcare, transportation, and the stability of learning environments. It has real financial, logistical and employment impacts on working families. Grandparenting is already occurring under the EPR; to deny Devonshire kids **creates new inequities.**

There is **no urgent need** to force kids to switch schools. Under the proposed boundary changes, Centennial would be over capacity at 103% while Devonshire's projected enrollment will drop to **66% capacity,** offering plenty of room for a **gradual, natural transition** that keeps Devonshire viable while new developments at Gladstone Village and Lebreton Flats are built.

This is the most significant restructuring of elementary education in decades and it will shape our schools and communities for generations. **We cannot afford to get this wrong.** Families need to know that the board is making decisions with care, compassion, accountability and a full understanding of the impacts. Anything less would be a failure of governance-and a failure to protect the system this plan is supposed to improve.

Devonshire School Council, on behalf of Devonshire parents