



SPECIAL BOARD PUBLIC MINUTES

Wednesday, March 19, 2025
Board Room
Administration Building
133 Greenbank Road
Ottawa, Ontario

Trustees Present: Justine Bell (electronic participation), Donna Blackburn, Donna Dickson, Lyra Evans, Julia Fortey, Jennifer Jennekens, Nili Kaplan-Myrth, Cathryne Milburn, Suzanne Nash, Amanda Presley, Lynn Scott, Sharanya Sivasathiyathan (Student Trustee)

Staff Present: Pino Buffone (Director of Education), James Proulx (Executive Officer - Business and Learning Technologies), Jesse Mark (General Counsel - Governance & Legal Services), Shawn Lehman (Superintendent of Employee Services), A.J Keene (Superintendent of Education), Diane Pernari (General Manager of Communications & Public Relations), Darren Gatley (General Manager - Governance Services), Michael Guilbault (Content Creator, Digital Multimedia Technician), Johanna Morrison (Senior Board Coordinator)

1. Call to Order -- Chair of the Board

Chair Scott called the public meeting to order at 6:36 p.m.

2. Acknowledgment of Territorial Lands

Chair Scott acknowledged that the meeting is taking place on unceded Algonquin Homelands and thanked the Algonquin Nations for their stewardship of these lands since time immemorial.

3. Approval of the Agenda

**Moved by Trustee Kaplan-Myrth, seconded by Trustee Dickson,
THAT the agenda be approved.**

Carried

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were filed.

5. Presentation

5.1 Alternative Schools Advisory Committee (ASAC)

Emily Addison and Carolyn Webb, Co-Chairs of the Alternative Schools Advisory Committee (ASAC), provided a presentation outlining their concerns with the Elementary Program Review (EPR) proposal regarding the Alternative program. Emily suggested that trustees should consider ways to improve the program without cutting it fully. Emily highlighted the number of students accessing the Alternative program, the financial impact of cutting the program on low-income families, the negative impact on students of multiple teacher transitions throughout the school day, and the valued non-competitive culture of the Alternative program within the community. Emily suggested advertising the availability of the program to increase enrolment, encouraged trustees to examine other successful Alternative programs available across the province, and suggested having a more thorough consultation period, including Indigenous consultation.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Emily suggested having time for a less formal, more “back-and-forth” discussion between trustees and the Alternative program community;
- Emily indicated that there are many positive tenets of the Alternative program that could be adopted by mainstream schools, but it would require a shift away from a competition mindset as this is not the culture of the Alternative program; and
- Emily and Carolyn indicated that allowing all students to thrive in mainstream programs would require a shift in teaching practices. Carolyn encouraged more teachers to adopt the culture and values of the Alternative program.

6. Delegations

Chair Scott reviewed the meeting process and decorum for the Special Board meeting to hear delegations on the Elementary Program Review (EPR).

6.1 Regarding Elementary Alternative Programs

a. Mars Wichmann-Young (written)

Mars Wichmann-Young provided a written submission which described his experience in the alternative program and outlined the high level of support students receive in the program, allowing students to thrive in an environment tailored to their needs.

b. Miles White (written)

Miles White provided a written submission discussing the difficulties families will face if neurodiverse students no longer have the option of alternative programming and encouraged trustees to reconsider closing the alternative schools.

6.2 Regarding Special Education Programs

a. Guillaume Cote (oral)

Guillaume Cote voiced his concerns about the current proposal regarding the special education programs and highlighted the financial implications for families affected.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Guillaume clarified additional financial pressures could include expenses for occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech/language therapy; and
- Guillaume indicated his daughter only qualified for an educational assistant (EA) to assist her for half the school day in a mainstream program.

b. Sonja Elliott (oral)

Sonja Elliott highlighted her concern with the proposed changes to the General Learning Program (GLP) and the effect on student supports, noting the sense of belonging and high level of engagement her son experiences in a GLP. She suggested providing a staffing plan and cost-analysis of keeping programs status quo versus spreading services across schools, as proposed in the EPR.

c. Michelle Parker (oral)

Michelle Parker was not in attendance.

6.3 Regarding French as a Second Language

a. Kristina Laperle, representing Canadian Parents for French (oral)

Kristina Laperle, representing Canadian Parents for French, questioned cancelling the Middle French Immersion (MFI) program and whether a rolling entry model into Early French Immersion (EFI) currently proposed in the EPR will improve student French proficiency. She voiced her concerns about the impact on teaching plans, and recommended increasing French instructional time in the primary grades.

In response to a query, the following information was noted:

- Kristina clarified that a French Immersion (FI) rolling entry will result in having students with various levels of French proficiency in one class. This would make it difficult for educators as they would need to adjust their teaching plan to accommodate the lowest levels of proficiency in the class.

6.4 Regarding Rockcliffe Park Cluster

a. Jessica Strauss (oral)

Jessica Strauss expressed her thoughts regarding expanding Rockcliffe Park Public School (RPPS) to a kindergarten to grade 8 school. She suggested incorporating a phased approach into the EPR proposal, minimizing transitions for students, and utilizing already existing school infrastructure to incorporate grades 7 and 8 into RPPS.

In response to a query, the following information was noted:

- Jessica clarified that a phased approach would seek to retain grade 7 and 8 students at RPPS, and a community-based approach would involve using the natural divide of St. Laurent Boulevard as a school boundary to limit students crossing this busy road.

b. Tara Doherty (written)

Tara Doherty provided a written submission discussing the impact of the RPPS boundary change on the Lowertown community, including the socioeconomic disparity of the community, destabilizing student supports, and the negative impact on student mental health. Concerns with school capacity and hiring adequate levels of FI educators were also noted.

Tara's written delegation also discussed the impact of changing schools would have on her daughter.

c. Joanne Lynch, on behalf of the Rockcliffe Park Public School School Council (written)

Joanne Lynch provided a written submission on behalf of the RPPS School Council, highlighting the impact of disrupting student support systems. Concerns were also highlighted regarding hiring sufficient FI educators and the negative impact on student mental health. Joanne suggested a phased implementation approach including a grandparenting provision, and expanding RPPS to a kindergarten to grade 8 school.

6.5 Regarding Kars on the Rideau Cluster

a. Kayla Fernet (oral)

Kayla Fernet expressed her concern regarding the boundary changes proposed for Kars on the Rideau Public School and North Gower Public School, highlighting the importance of utilizing the already completed addition to Kars on the Rideau Public School as North Gower has limited space for expansion. She also highlighted the increase in busing due to rural roads and recommended keeping the community schools as status quo.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Kayla indicated that 67 community families responded to a survey on the impacts of the EPR in their region; and
- Kayla indicated that 95-98% students in the community require bus transportation due to country roads, with Kars on the Rideau Public School having a larger walk zone.

6.6 Regarding Woodroffe Cluster

a. Elizabeth MacDonald (oral)

Elizabeth MacDonald expressed her concern regarding the proposed boundary changes for the Carlingwood and Woodpark communities, noting the current proposal will separate siblings, increase student school transitions, and students will need to cross busy streets such as Highway 417 to get to their school. She noted the community has drafted a proposed amendment to address student walking safety for the schools in the community.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Elizabeth stated that a parent in the community mapped out all possible school commutes, noting the major streets students needed to cross to get to school;
- Elizabeth provided a copy of her proposed amendment to trustees;
- Elizabeth provided an overview of how her community has gathered parental feedback on the EPR proposal, noting limited resources available on the EPR consultation process in languages other than English; and
- Chair Scott clarified that there are resources available in other languages, and Ottawa-Carleton District School Board (OCDSB) staff are working directly with schools facing language barriers to ensure inclusion in the EPR consultation process.

b. Emily Crowe (written)

Emily Crowe provided a written submission expressing her concerns regarding the proposed boundary change in the Woodroffe community, noting the separation of siblings, the busy streets students would need to cross to get to school, underutilization of primary-specific space in schools, and limited availability of school bus transportation.

c. Hilary Jensen (written)

Hilary Jensen provided a written submission regarding the proposed boundary change in the Carlingwood neighbourhood, noting several schools are closer in proximity than the proposed school for her address, and Woodroffe Avenue Public School would require retrofitting to accommodate older students. She suggested revisiting the boundary configuration for Zone 4, and delaying decision making until a more robust consultation process can occur.

6.7 Regarding Bayview/Sawmill Creek Cluster

a. Lisa Chamney (oral)

Lisa Chamney proposed keeping the boundaries in the Windsor Park village neighbourhood to Bayview Public School and Fielding Drive Public School, noting concern with students crossing busy roads to attend the currently proposed designated school, and added barriers with public transportation.

In response to a query, the following information was noted:

- Lisa indicated she will send in a map of the neighbourhood outlining the roads referenced in her presentation.

The meeting recessed at 7:43 p.m. and resumed at 7:55 p.m.

6.8 Regarding Broadview Cluster

a. Laura D'Angelo (oral)

Laura D'Angelo discussed the impact of separating siblings among different schools, noting changes to before and after care availability, the difficulty for families to navigate different school start and end times, and accommodating different school events. She suggested reexamining the proposed boundary changes to keep siblings together.

b. Briar Howes (written)

Briar Howes provided a written submission suggesting adding a grandparenting clause to the proposed EPR, noting this would allow students in their final elementary years to complete their education at their 2025-2026 school.

c. Adwaile Tiwary (oral)

Adwaile Tiwary noted his concern with the proposed boundary changes in his community, noting it will separate siblings, increase the number of school staff and administration that parents will need to communicate with, complicate drop-off and pick-up times, and highlighted the impact of this on single-parent families. He suggested allowing exemptions for siblings, making reasonable boundary changes, and delaying voting to allow for a longer consultation process. He also requested a gender-based assessment of the proposal.

In response to a query, the following information was noted:

- Adwaile clarified a gender-based assessment would provide information on the impact of the proposal on different genders, using drop-off and pick-up times as an example.

6.9 Regarding Knoxdale Cluster

a. Beth Lawless (oral)

Beth Lawless drew from her son's difficult school experience in the primary grades and discussed the importance of keeping the Briargreen Public School boundaries status quo.

b. Kristin Phillippi (oral)

Kristin Phillippi expressed her thoughts on the financial aspects of the EPR, suggesting several options for trustees to consider, and requested meaningful consultation on the proposed changes in the EPR. Kristin also provided to trustees a copy of the financial information she discussed.

In response to a query, the following information was noted:

- Kristin indicated she quoted from the Ministry of Education (MOE) with respect to the definition of a school trustee.

c. Paul Black (written)

Paul Black provided a written submission regarding the proposed boundary changes to Knoxdale, Briargreen, and Manordale Public Schools, noting the proposed changes would increase the number of students using school bus transportation who currently walk to

school. He suggested reconsidering the proposed boundary changes to allow students the opportunity to walk to school.

d. Pamela Byrne (written)

Pamela Byrne provided a written submission regarding the proposed boundary changes, highlighting the increased commute time for students, the changes to school capacity, and the cultural considerations of the community. She recommended maintaining the current school catchment areas for the Craig Henry and CentrepoinTE communities.

e. Amy Thomas (written)

Amy Thomas provided a written submission discussing her concerns with financial transparency in regard to the proposed changes in the EPR. She suggested several options to assist with an OCDSB budget deficit.

f. Todd Whitley (written)

Todd Whitley provided a written submission noting potential overcapacity at Manordale Public School and the added school buses needed to transport students to school. He suggested maintaining the existing FI boundaries for Knoxdale Public School and Briargreen Public School.

6.10 Regarding Pleasant Park Cluster

a. Amy Dempsey Raven (oral)

Amy Dempsey Raven expressed her concern with the proposed boundary changes regarding Pleasant Park Public School (PPPS), noting the significant change to the current boundary, the separation of siblings, the increased need for school bus transportation, and the impact on both single and low-income families.

In response to a query, the following information was noted:

- Amy indicated that from a community survey of PPPS families, 45% of students would change from walking to school bus transportation, and 9% would change from school bus transportation to walking.

6.11 Regarding Severn/Pinecrest Cluster

a. Magdalena Anderchuk (oral)

Magdalena Anderchuk discussed the strong community relationships built in her community of Queensway Terrace North,

and voiced her concern with the proposed changes to Severn Avenue Public School and Pinecrest Public School. She highlighted the difficulty for families in navigating multiple drop-off and pick-up times and school events, as well as the increased use of school bus transportation.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Magdalena stated the two schools in her community would have 100% busing if the proposed changes are approved; and
- Magdalena indicated approximately 120 out of approximately 300 students are currently using school bus transportation.

b. Sarah Sullivan Partridge (written)

Sarah Sullivan Partridge provided a written submission to address the Severn Avenue Public School and Pinecrest Public School proposed boundary changes.

6.12 Regarding Roberta Bondar Cluster

a. Natalee Lewis (oral)

Natalee Lewis voiced her concerns with the proposed EPR, suggesting the Board provide data from consultations with marginalized, low-income and recent immigrant families, and a risk analysis to support the changes. Natalee also suggested delaying the vote on the proposed changes to allow for more collaboration.

Director Buffone clarified that the budget deficit referenced during the Committee of the Whole (COW) Budget meeting on 18 March 2025 is in regard to the 2025-2026 school year, whereas the changes proposed in the EPR would take effect in the 2026-2027 school year.

A point of order was requested regarding comments referencing medical experts indicating a forced relocation of children. Chair Scott indicated this can be addressed during the delegate's question period.

In response to this query, the following information was noted:

- Natalee clarified that two medical doctors from the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario (CHEO) wrote a letter discussing the forced relocation of children 4 to 8 years old; and

- Trustee Kaplan-Myrth suggested that these doctors are not official representatives of CHEO's position on this matter.

6.13 Regarding Castor Valley Cluster

a. Shelley Petersen-Quesnel (written)

Shelley Petersen-Quesnel provided a written submission, drawing from her personal community experience and her son's school experience to bring attention to the impact of the proposed boundary changes to Castor Valley Elementary School on her family. She suggested grandparenting for students who wish to remain in their 2025-2026 school.

6.14 Regarding Elgin Cluster

a. Katie Gibbs (oral)

Katie Gibbs noted the proposed boundary changes for Elgin Street Public School (ESPS) will separate siblings and highlighted the negative impact of COVID-19 on this cohort of students. She suggested grandparenting current students to limit disruptions, and delaying the vote on the proposal to allow for a more meaningful consultation period.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Katie indicated there has not been an in-person consultation for this zone yet. It was later indicated one is scheduled for 26 March 2025;
- Katie noted the ESPS School Council has organized two meetings to discuss the EPR, and the ESPS Parent Council has sent out information about the EPR to families;
- Katie indicated she believes one month is not enough time for a consultation period; and
- Information was provided on other consultations occurring in the community; however, Chair Scott ruled this as out of order as the delegate already received three questions of clarification.

b. Geoffrey Solomon (oral)

Geoffrey Solomon voiced his concerns regarding the proposed boundary changes in the Centretown, Hintonburg, and Lowertown communities. He noted the increased need for school bus transportation, the negative impact on after school care options, and the reduction in youth jobs in the after school care program. He

suggested using a phased approach to boundary changes, and ensure siblings can stay together.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Geoffrey indicated Bronson Street is a very dangerous road for pedestrians to cross; and
- Geoffrey noted the negative impact of separating friend groups among four different schools, and the loss of access to community supports.

6.15 Regarding Devonshire Cluster

a. Jesse Cressman-Dickinson (oral)

Jesse Cressman-Dickinson noted the proposed boundary changes will increase commute time to access FI programming in her community, and the lack of time to provide community feedback during the consultation period. She recommended prolonging the timeframe for consultation, providing a detailed cost breakdown of the proposed EPR changes, reexamining the school boundaries to align with community-based schooling, and providing a grandparenting option.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Jesse clarified that the separation of the Enhanced English (EE) and FI programs does not separate her children, but her children will need to travel further to access FI; and
- Jesse noted having the success metric data available at the beginning of the consultation process would assist the community in understanding some of the problems the EPR is attempting to address.

b. Anne Maffre, on behalf of the Devonshire Community Public School Parent Council (written)

Anne Maffre provided a written submission on behalf of the Devonshire Community Public School Parent Council, noting concerns with the consultation process. She requested a longer consultation period, a detailed report outlining costs, plans and solutions for a variety of issues, a reexamination of the proposed boundaries for the West Centretown and Hintonburg East communities, and a grandparenting option.

6.16 Regarding Elementary Program Review (EPR) Process & Implementation

a. Kelly Campbell (oral)

Kelly Campbell expressed her concern with the EPR process, noting there is insufficient data or projections provided to understand the level of change proposed, and highlighted various areas of risk to students.

Chair Scott noted that the Board did not approve any reductions to EAs or other non-teacher qualified staff at the COW Budget meeting on 18 March 2025, but did approve a recommendation regarding teaching staff, and this recommendation has not yet been approved by the Board.

b. Trevor Gervais (oral)

Trevor Gervais discussed the importance of understanding the budget of the proposed EPR changes, as well as the transition plan for students in the special education and Alternative program.

c. Sarah Smith (oral)

Sarah Smith highlighted the negative impact of the proposed boundary changes on siblings, noting the difficulty for parents in navigating different drop off and pick up times, the increased use of school bus transportation, and the additional expenses for child care. She suggested allowing the grandparenting of younger students so they can stay with their siblings.

In response to queries, the following information was noted:

- Sarah clarified that with the proposed boundary changes she would require child care for both of her children, adding an additional \$60,000 expense over six years; and
- Sarah indicated grandparenting could be for current families and proposed boundary changes could be for new families.

d. Peter Davidson, on behalf of Jodi-Jane Longley (oral)

Peter Davidson, on behalf of Jodi-Jane Longley, raised questions about the methodology of the EPR, including budget, plan for additional human resources needed in classrooms, consultation period, and process for drawing new boundaries.

Director Buffone clarified that streamlining programs allows the District to redirect funds to serve students more effectively and efficiently. He noted there will be a large, one-time movement of students, which will then stabilize the cohorts moving from elementary to secondary school sites. He clarified that approximately 30 school sites are prioritized in the capital fund plan each school year, and the schools most significantly impacted by the EPR will be prioritized in the 2026-2027 school year. He

indicated a transition plan has been prepared and will be shared with trustees, and staff have followed the guidelines regarding a Pupil Accommodation Review Guideline (PARG). He noted that while some communities have raised concerns with the proposed changes in the EPR, others have welcomed the positive impact.

6.17 Additional Written Delegations

a. Claire Lewis re Connaught Public School Boundary Changes (written)

Claire Lewis provided a written submission discussing concerns with the proposed boundary changes for Connaught Public School, noting the longer commute time and already existing strong school community. She recommended a longer more meaningful consultation period, a transition plan, and a grandparenting option.

b. Elena Davies re Extended Day Programming (written)

Elena Davies provided a written submission discussing the impact of the EPR on extended day programming and child care needs of the community, drawing from her own family's situation as an example.

c. Jeanna Chan re Connaught Boundary Change (written)

Jeanna Chan provided a written submission expressing concern with the proposed EPR, noting longer commute times, the disruption to a stable social and academic environment, and the duration of the consultation period.

d. Jean Acharya re Severn Avenue Public School (written)

Jean Acharya provided a written submission regarding Severn Avenue Public School and Pinecrest Public School, discussing safety risks and transportation issues, the impact of grade 4 transitions, and the potential changes to childcare provided through the Regina Elementary Kindergarten School Age Program (REKSAP).

e. Erica Mitchell re Devonshire/Connaught Public School Boundary Change (written)

Erica Mitchell provided a written submission noting concerns with the proposals boundary changes for Connaught Public School, highlighting longer commute times, separating siblings, and disruption to community connections.

f. Maira Martin re Pleasant Park Boundary Change (written)

Maira Martin provided a written submission regarding the proposed boundary changes for Pleasant Park Public School, noting the separation of siblings, logistical transportation issues, and the impact on childcare arrangements.

g. Mark Radley re CHEO (written)

Mark Radley provided a written submission discussing the transition of students from the CHEO School to grade 1.

h. Rene Toupin-Piper re Boundary Change (written)

Rene Toupin-Piper provided a written submission noting the preferred configuration of kindergarten to grade 6 or kindergarten to grade 8 schools, highlighting keeping siblings together and easing school drop-off and pick-up logistics.

i. Megan Maloney re Castor Valley/Osgoode Boundary Change (written)

Megan Maloney provided a written submission regarding the proposed boundary changes for Osgoode Public School, noting the impact on the community.

j. Emma McQueen re Castor Valley/Osgoode Boundary Change (written)

Emma McQueen provided a written submission noting the impact of the proposed boundary changes on Osgoode Public School, recommending reexamining the boundaries, and allowing grandparenting of students into their 2025-2026 school.

k. Bill Salminen re Rockcliffe Park Boundary Change (written)

Bill Salminen provided a written submission on behalf of his daughter, highlighting concerns with the proposed boundary change for Rockcliffe Park Public School, and recommending allowing a grandparenting clause.

l. Anne Ritzema re Alta Vista Boundary Change (written)

Anne Ritzema provided a written submission expressing concern regarding the proposed changes to Alta Vista Public School, noting the impact on student friendships, the increased use of bus transportation, and the separation of siblings. She recommended a phased approach, and a transition plan for older students.

m. Kirsten Appleyard re Boundary Changes (written)

Kirsten Appleyard provided a written submission expressing her concern with the psychological impact of the EPR proposed

changes on students, the logistical challenges of parent involvement in schools, the impact on students with special learning needs, and the decreased French instruction time.

n. Emma Vincent re Castor Valley

Emma Vincent provided a written submission noting the effect of the proposed boundary changes on Castor Valley Elementary School, highlighting the negative impact on student mental health.

7. Matters for Information

There were no new matters for information.

8. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:27 p.m.

Lynn Scott, Chair of the Board