

Good evening. I am one of a large group of parents and community members - from various schools involved in this process - who are against building a school with a capacity of ~2500 students in a City with a population of ~51,000. As many of the presenters who have spoken before me have pointed out, this would be the biggest school in Ontario.

We created a ten question survey to gauge the reasons why like-minded people, who are against this super school agenda, are not supportive of the Board Preferred Option. The survey was shared on social media and anyone was welcome to take it and share the link. There were 432 responses and the numbers indicate that those who took part are largely against the proposed super school. 72% of those who took the survey are concerned about student achievement, social adjustment, and the transportation logistics of a single 2500-student school at this site. There was less concern for the proposed K-6 school at the WJ Fricker site.

Almost half of those not in favour of the Board Preferred Option reported that they would consider leaving the NNDSB and seek other alternatives. 46% of those who took the survey said they would switch boards and enroll their children with the Catholic School Board; some were in favour of the French Public or Catholic Boards; others stated their intent to homeschool. In the comments section, there were a number of people who also said they would consider moving to another city or town to avoid their child attending a school of this size.

Over 80% of those who answered did not feel as though six months is a substantial amount of time to address the issues that are most concerning to them as parents. While the ARC process may be as per Ministry guidelines, the preparation to embark on such a process should have been much more transparent and involved a number of persons and organizations at the Municipal level. More than half of those who took the survey also felt that not enough has been done to reach community members, including parents, business owners, City officials and other interested parties.

There have been some complaints that the survey was biased, but it served our purposes, which was to identify reasons why people are against it. A more fulsome survey should have been developed by the Board before this project got off the ground, with Board employees given the opportunity to give anonymous input (since they are the ones who will be teaching our children). I have spoken with dozens of Board employees who feel as though they cannot voice their opinions because they are contrary to the Board's Preferred Option, and feel that doing so will have personal and professional ramifications for them. I will suggest that there are representatives from each of the schools involved who are sitting silently in front of us tonight, unable to speak their minds about an Option that will not be in the best interest of those most affected - the students.

Having sat on the committee during the last ARC - though half the size of this, and with far fewer issues on our plates - I appreciate the hard work that the ARC members have put in to come up with alternate proposals. Much more thought and concern is evident in these proposals and they are clearly student - human, really - centric. They take into

consideration not just the students, but parents, and the neighbourhoods, and community at large. Thank you. Thank you for doing a job that by all rights and purposes should have been done by the Board before it got to the ARC stage. This is not simply about money. The Board - as we've seen in local news articles - will have you believe that funding is being taken away at an alarming speed, but they will not mention the NEW funding that has been allocated, nor will they mention that the projected funding for the NNDSB is about 3.8 million dollars MORE for the 2017/2018 school year than the funding for this school year. "Find us the funding," I have been told. I'm sorry, but that is their job. Our job is want what's best for our children and fight for it, and their job is to figure out a way that considers more than just the almighty dollar.

I've mentioned the transparency of this process, and while the ARC members came up with other alternatives, the Board is not open to them. Don't be fooled. They are actively recruiting members of the public and interested parties to speak on their behalf, promising incredible athletic facilities, while crying poor. Just over a week ago, a Project Manager dangled the carrot of all carrots during a 40 minute conversation with a teacher from one of the high schools who is involved with athletics in an attempt to recruit him to speak on the Board's behalf and back a single school "under one roof". Comments such as:

"Not a pool, but whatever you can think of that you'd like to see - like maybe a squash court."

The teacher mentioned a pilates room and the Project Manager said, "Exactly! Or meditation rooms like they're doing for kids with anxiety."

There was also talk of a covered outdoor rink like they have in Callander, city bus passes for all students to use the athletic facilities, and pushing to have City bike trails extended so kids can bike to school to use these expensive facilities. Not a pool though; the Project Manager suggested that a pool would be a liability and therefore unattainable. The pool wasn't denied because of the COST of one, but because of the liability. The teacher was asked whom he might approach to publicly endorse the preferred option; names of those already approached by the Board were given, and those who might be approached, were suggested.

The Project Manager instructed the teacher to, if he had any thoughts, jot them down - but not put them in an email. They are pointing out funding cuts that are prohibitive to a two-school plan on the one hand, while promising expensive, state-of-the-art athletic facilities on the other. I would love to see the Board actually considering one of the wonderful proposals submitted by the ARC members, but what's that saying? Fool me once shame on you, fool me twice shame on me? Last time I was fooled by numbers, and data, and promises of facilities and support for students affected. I ask that the Board earnestly consider the other, more reasonable, proposals, and I ask that the panel in front of me, and the people of North Bay not be fooled as I was. Please don't just go through the motions because it's required. Please do the very important job you've been tasked with doing and above all else, think of our kids.

Thank you.