

Good evening. I am Natalie Brunette, tax payer and retired secondary teacher after 29 years with the Near North District school board. I am speaking in support of the ARC decision to create both a north and south intermediate secondary site within the City of North Bay.

The decision which your group is tasked with, will become one of the most historic events to impact this area since the City of North Bay and the Townships of Widdifield and Ferris were amalgamated in January 1968!

You now have the opportunity to create unique and unimaginable educational experiences that will impact and shape our future generations well into the next century!! As a former teacher, coach and guidance counsellor, I would hope that you will make this decision using the facts and supported data and **not** based on your loyalties to the present schools which will **all** become history with the rebranding of the facilities created as a result of this ARC.

I am very aware of the time that has been spent by Board officials over the past several years evaluating the various schools and determining which schools would be best suited to offer all of the programs which currently exist. At the same time, I would hope that you are also requiring our Board officials to look long term and strive to build an even better public education system that will facilitate both the learning and the social, physical and mental development of not only this generation of learners but those of the next two or three!

As we stand tonight in this beautiful secondary school auditorium which has been recognized as one of the best in Northern Ontario, I have to wonder why this site is being portrayed by many in the public as not offering an arts program, despite its provincially recognized drama and arts programs. Perhaps with the upcoming changes, you might require creative programming and rotation of specialized staff to both sites to allow all of the students in the Near North Board the opportunity to experience the immense knowledge and expertise that the current teaching staffs have to offer. This would allow parents and students entering grade seven to **not** be faced with the overwhelming decision of knowing exactly which level of programming and career stream they would like to pursue once they enter high school in two years time. This type of novel programming would also allow the school population at each site to be balanced as students would finally be able to attend the nearest school and not have to be transported by parents or bus to an out of zone school which is currently the practice. Specialized programs such as SHSM's would also be able to be offered at both sites.

By ensuring equal programming, you the trustees would personally be helping to rebrand the new schools and allow the entire North Bay community to accept and embrace the new sites. After all, the Trojans, Raiders and

Wildcats have been our public education mascots in the community for over 100 years and these changes will take time to accept!

As a tax payer, I hope that you as trustees make the effort to contact all of the shareholders (parents and students included) to gain a **truthful** understanding of **historically why** school populations attended particular schools now being rebranded. Perhaps program decisions for out of town students for example have not been based on program but rather on personal reasons such as parents already working in the City and wishing to have their students here for dental, employment and afterschool activities. These are valid reasons which need to be included when making final programming decisions.

Reconfiguring the new school sites will cost money so I would hope that the Trustees and Board officials would learn from their previous mistakes and create buildings which will also serve **all of the agencies** and community groups which use the facilities throughout the entire day. After all, a school does not close its doors at 3:30. Rather this is the time when our facilities are shared with community groups. When making changes to the two sites, I would hope that you would insist on each of these groups being consulted so that their input and wishes can be included to ensure that they continue to rent our spaces which adds financial benefits when funding the costs of programming.

As a teacher who experienced the amalgamation of Silver Birches Intermediate and West Ferris Secondary, I am very aware of the differing needs between the two groups. Separate gym, tech, art and music areas are just a few areas which must be considered to truly offer quality educational experiences for our students. Hopefully you have in writing exactly how much the Ministry of Education will commit to this venture so that the buildings will support the learning requirements not only today but into the next century. The tax payers and parents have high expectations for the type of buildings and programming which will be available. With the current estimation that the present day secondary student will change his/her job a minimum of 10 x in a work life span, it is your **elected responsibility** to ensure that our students will have the skills and confidence to succeed!

In closing Trustees, before the June 27 meeting, I hope that you will take the time to reflect on the comments and input provided by both the tax payers and ARC committee members and **vote in favour** of creating two new intermediate secondary schools for the City of North Bay.