

Secondary Student Accommodation: **supporting the 3:1 central secondary school model...a long-term solution**

*Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future. -John F. Kennedy*

This is the fourth time our family has been part of an accommodation process since the first of our five children began school. I dedicated so much energy during the past two ARCs involving the French Immersion schools, plus the 7/8 transition from Alliance to Chippewa (a move that I fully support—CSS staff did a great job making it a 7-12 model school) that I didn't have it in me this round. However, in light of the ARC recommendation of two high schools with the FI and IB programs moving to West Ferris, I cannot stay silent. This decision must NOT be a Raiders vs Trojans vs Wildcats concern. This decision must NOT be the responsibility of the NNDSB to satisfy a demographic challenge of the City of North Bay. The ARC is the process, however fundamentally flawed, resulting from the Ontario Ministry of Education holding the NNDSB fiscally accountable for the funds they receive to meet the educational needs of the North Bay Secondary students within a community hosting four school boards. The baby boomers and their children have grown up...it is time for a long-term solution to a trending problem of excess space in aging buildings. I will not waste my time reviewing the data that senior staff generated. However, I will remind you that based on this data and close to two years of team work, staff made a recommendation to move from 3:1 secondary schools in a central location and that even after the ARC's recommendation, the Final Staff Report (FSR) states: "While this is a move in the right direction, staff have identified that this would be an interim solution for the North Bay Planning Area" (*p.14 Final Staff Report from NNDSB*). I do NOT support the current ARC recommendation for two high schools (particularly as presented with FI and IB programs moving to WFSS). You are presented with the opportunity to make a fiscally sound business decision that will have a corresponding benefit of offering our children a more diverse educational experience. Moving to one centrally located secondary school consolidates all resources and ensures all students have equal access to all programs.

**Just a few reasons for supporting the 3:1 model**

For ease of reading and writing, I will give my reasons in bullet format:

- Experience
  - Our fourth child is about to begin grade 9 at CSS—the increased number of students attending CSS since our oldest two started (a low point after last ARC) translates to more course sections in both the English and FI mandatory prerequisites, scheduling will be easier for him
- Equity of diverse programming/student options in program and course selection
  - this will meet the needs of students who are not mainstream academic learners
  - will expose students to programming/learning resources that would otherwise be unavailable because all financial resources are split between 3 (or 2) schools
    - NNDSB transitioned the Extended French Student from WSS to CSS in large part due to need to centralize resources in order to maintain integrity of the program
    - Growth in dramatic arts--there is no limit to the number of entries a school can make in the Sears drama festival—think about the success of TOROS
    - Increase in tech studies—great resources of all three schools combined—wow—more trades people!
  - ease of bridging programs with feeder schools
  - refer to presentation from teachers (WFSS staff and Andrea Lefebvre) outlining the merits of the one school
- greater diversity in clientele—real world learning and relationship building
  - many have expressed concern that the proposed school is too big, yet Jasper Place HS in Edmonton, a 9-12 school, was ranked the #1 secondary school in Canada by MacLean's Magazine in 2005. This school, whose enrollment at that time was roughly 2000, and in 2015-16 was 2431 students, has diverse programming to meet the learning styles of over 400 special needs students right through IB academic learners. One student stated: "It's good to have diversity. It's an education in the real world, not some sheltered environment". North Bay CAN do this...why not be innovative leaders in Ontario's education system?
- work already accomplished could be lost
  - FI is an established program that has been moved TOO MANY times—one more move to an area of town where most clients do not live is likely detrimental—some have indicated that FI has survived many moves already they will survive this too. However, it should be noted (as outlined in the letter from Alissa Mitchell) all transitions have been centrally located.
  - IB is a relatively new program for which the NNDSB has made not only significant financial investments, but also great investments in time and energy—this program is growing but it's roots are not yet established
    - If your decision is 3:2 and there is a mass exodus from the FI and IB programs, as many parents have indicated because the location is inconvenient, be prepared for your numbers of roughly 1100 split

between two schools to be skewed—a great number who will leave these programs live in the north end catchment area

- The IB program is attached to a school, not a board. I believe it would have to be shut down and the board would have to reapply in order to offer it at WFSS; a process that could take two years.
- support resource personnel will actually spend time with the students rather than travelling between schools
- opportunity for dynamic intramural and extra-curricular programming
  - A chance for students to explore diverse interests with a wider variety of clubs and teams. There is an expressed concern for loss of competitive sports teams—potential for this school to have two teams entered in the NDA OR have a competitive tournament team with great intramurals actually has the potential to meet the needs of more students (from a city planning perspective this may increase the participation in city planned sporting programs)
  - FACT: all schools will struggle to field teams if they don't amalgamate—CSS and WFSS have experienced this challenge and have had to run varsity programs rather than junior and senior teams...WSS is starting to experience what this may be like.
- Less (potential) traffic congestion at CSS
  - have you ever been at the intersection of O'Brien and Ski Club during school drop-off and pick-up hours? Try it and tell me it's not a problem—and there are no alternative routes.
  - there are multiple access routes to CSS and greater opportunity to work with the city to come up with possible traffic solutions
    - possibility to provide shuttle service from Memorial Gardens if traffic is a challenge
    - student drop off and walk in possible from many locations including Memorial Gardens
    - work with the already established active and safe schools team (consider hiring a co-ordinator)
    - there is the over the highway walking bridge for students in the Widdifield area of the city
    - work with the city to establish designated biking lanes on the main road ways...this improves transportation for the entire city of North Bay
      - in the winter months—frequent removal of snow banks on High, Stones and O'Brien will improve safety concerns
      - City could work with NNDSB towards opening Devonshire as the main access for Alliance, thus diverting much of the traffic off High St.
- IT'S A LONG-TERM SOLUTION!
  - Given the data collected by the Board and the current disrepair of the schools I believe the 3:2 option will be, as indicated in the FSR—a lateral movement—another short-term solution. The two schools require too much renovation—the cost to repair long term is prohibitive—having been through this before...I do not believe you will get the necessary funding from the Ministry.

If you make the decision to proceed with a one school option please build for growth. Although it may not happen in the first few years (in fact you may lose a few in the initial years), my guess is that as the community becomes accustomed to the size of the school, one centrally located 21<sup>st</sup> century secondary NNDSB school will become the school of choice.

If you proceed with the ARC recommendation, be prepared to lose clientele. The majority of the clients in both the FI and IB programs do not live in the Ferris area...people will not be willing to travel from one end of the city to the other on a long term daily basis as most before/after school programming/jobs are located in the north end/central areas of the city.

Moving 3:2 is a lateral move. As you prepare to lose a significant amount of capital funding, you know that funding models for new builds could change and North Bay and district would miss out on a brand-new build. Don't stop progress because of current fear. Take the risk of the 3:1 model and the NNDSB will have a dynamic 21<sup>st</sup> century learning space for those who see the merits and persevere. In the words of Richard Buckminster Fuller, an American architect, systems theorist, author of 30 books, designer, and inventor: "You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

Thank you for taking these thoughts into your decision-making process.

Kim Winrow

FI parent of 5, 2 graduates and 3 currently attending two schools in the NNDSB (Alliance and Chippewa)

*\*The website of the secondary school referenced in my submission: <http://jasperplace.epsb.ca/>. This school has in excess of 2400 students and has been ranked #1 in Canada by MacLean's Magazine.*