

Good evening Trustees, ARC members, parents, students and community members. I'm thankful that everyone in the audience has taken the time to attend this final meeting tonight - it shows your interest, civic mindedness and foresight - not only for your own children, but for every child in this Board now and in the future.

From the very first meeting, the message from the Board was that they had not yet made up their minds and assured those in attendance that the Accommodation Review process is a new one. Also at that first meeting, it became very clear that the Board Preferred Option - to close all three public high schools and build one 2,247 student super school - had much opposition from our community.

There are two ARC process timelines that are available as per the Ministry of Education, and our Board embarked on the long (and I use that term loosely) one - the Standard Review Process - which takes a minimum of five months from start to finish. Five months to address the closure of six schools, including three elementary schools - EW Norman, ET Carmichael and WJ Fricker, and three high schools - *all* three of our Near North District School Board high schools - West Ferris, Chippewa and Widdifield. In their place would be two new builds - a new K-6 school at the WJ Fricker site, and one super secondary school with grades 7-12 at the Chippewa site.

Five months. Five months to consider the transportation needs, programming needs, social, emotional, and academic implications, neighbourhood implications, and implications for the City of North Bay. I haven't even mentioned the extraordinary costs involved, though they are - in my opinion - a drop in the bucket compared to the educational and developmental costs to our children. It isn't uncommon for people to spend five months deciding whether or not to buy a house or a car - and those generally affect a single family for a specific term and don't involve even a small percentage of the funds associated with the Board's Preferred Option. Asking a panel of volunteers to make a recommendation of this magnitude, based on reams of information - some which is correct, some which is not - is a daunting task. Having sat on the last ARC (which I'll maintain didn't turn out terribly well) that included amalgamating three elementary schools into a new build, I am amazed that the current ARC was able to do such a thorough job sifting through information, being open to community feedback, and almost unanimously voting to recommend a 3:2 option - voting almost unanimously against one grades 7-12 super school. Kudos to them for having the stamina, but more importantly the collective conscience to think about what is best for our children, their children's children, along with all of the children in between, and the City of North Bay. After the first public meeting I began working with a group of like-minded individuals whose main focus was to stop the super school. Our goal has never changed, we have never wavered. We do not care where the programs are. We do not care where the boundaries are. We will embrace the closing of one school and encourage our children to embrace going to one of the two remaining schools. They will take their lead from us and as parents we can make it as easy for them, or as difficult for them, as we choose to make it. We do not care about the logistics of downsizing to two schools from three. We care only about stopping a decision that is, for all intents and purposes, a social experiment.

Shortly after the second public meeting, we created a petition on change.org, hoping to get a couple hundred signatures and input from people like us. That petition, the online version and the hard copies, has more than 1,000 signatures. There are comments from

parents, grandparents, community members, former residents, and students - none of whom think that a 2,247 student school, in a City with a population of 51,000 makes sense. I'm going to read you some of these comments.

<insert comments>

The community has spoken; the presenters - representing different socio-demographics of our City - have spoken (almost exclusively against a super school); the ARC panel has spoken; and those who contributed to the Final Staff Report have spoken. North Bay does not want a super school.

Thank you