

March 7 – SAWB meeting – Item 10a) Greet Gemels, Parent, St. Brigid, regarding JK French Immersion

“Received and referred to Staff to come back with a report including the JK French Immersion admission Policy with consideration for admission of the delegate’s child to the JK French Immersion program at St. Brigid Catholic School at the April 4, 2019 Student Achievement Committee meeting.”

A few months ago I registered my son for JK at St. Brigid’s. An appointment was set a week later with the registration office. Upon submitting the documents, an administrator wrote a rather large red P3 on the top of our documents and explained it was essentially ‘impossible for us to be offered a spot’. Both my husband and I are new to the process and asked if she could explain.

While we are in the catchment of the school, the priority is assigned starting at: a sibling attending, followed by proximity. Our address, 345 Cedarvale Avenue resulted in a P3 for my son. A mere 80 yards would have placed us in a P2 position.

I am originally from Belgium and my son communicates exclusively in French with my family– something we fostered by having him attend a Montessori with a strong French curriculum. This Montessori school finds itself a mere 70m from St. Brigid and it’s where most of his current classmates will be merging. French is such a big part of our family that I cannot imagine my children missing out.

She offered we should just register him at Canadian Martyrs *“because they can take anyone”*. Since then, I have contacted the School Board, who encouraged me to appeal through the system - which I have done through an a high number of calls, voicemails and emails (most of which gone unanswered for 7 weeks). When I finally spoke to the location, the conversation was nothing more but her confirming the Priority System (P1 to P3).

It is said this process is the only “fair and equitable” way of administering it, something I cannot agree with. The French Immersion stream should be separated from the concept of a community school and come based on a ‘first come, first serve’ – not one where having siblings enrolled automatically places you as well. Adding to this, I feel that the factors in

selecting the locations for French immersion are mostly socio-economic in nature (statistically speaking, 87%) – with the vast majority in an area with household incomes more than 200% above the median and a non-visible minority of well over 80% . How fair and equitable is that in a city as Toronto, where **more** than 1 in 2 inhabitants are of a visible minority?

After several unanswered calls and emails, I reached out to the Ontario Ombudsperson. Their mandate is to encourage a process in which the organization has an opportunity to respond and advised me to escalate until I have exhausted my options.

I assume that March 7 marks that event.

Thank you,