

Good evening Trustees, Director and Staff. Thank you for allowing me to speak tonight. My name is Jennifer Di Francesco and I am the CPIC Rep for Ward 1, as well as the Vice-Chair.

Let me start off with a statistic. Humber River-Black Creek, York South-Weston and North Etobicoke represent 4% of Toronto's total population, yet saw Covid cases 70% to 120% higher than Toronto overall, as Dr. Eileen de Villa stated on November 7 in an article by Shanifa Nasser at CBC News. These numbers are telling and yet these communities continue to get the short end of the stick, especially North Etobicoke.

If we want to live by our words and especially our policies when it comes to equity, not allowing families the full option to send their children will most definitely put more hardship on those facing socioeconomic and financial burdens.

We must remember that in North Etobicoke families are the ones working in the front lines in grocery stores, restaurants, senior homes, factories and other blue collar jobs that help keep our economy going. If they don't have the flexibility to send their children it may cause some to lose their jobs, sink deeper into debt, lose their homes or worsen their mental health.

There is also the equity issue. Those living in more affluent areas that have the means to stay home and have their children online have an advantage. For families in the hot spots there is a lack of technology or internet service for some. In North Etobicoke there is food and housing insecurity and cultural or language barriers. Families are more worried about being evicted, paying rent, bills and caring for their families than they are the virus.

Families in North Etobicoke feel disengaged from the rest of Toronto and feel they are not being heard or brought into the conversation. By shutting families out from making the decision to send their kids to school only reinforces a mistrust that's already there.

There is also the question of who gets to make the decision of which families will be allowed to send their children and who won't. How are these decisions made and by who? Medical? Family exceptional circumstances? Compassionate grounds? Who's to interpret these exceptions? And can families appeal the decisions? So many questions with very little answers.

Equity only works if it's given fairly and freely. It's not acceptable that some wards flourish while others wither. We have to have policy that has a direct impact on the needs and experiences of individual communities. I have heard the word Stability to justify the reasoning for not allowing parents to have the option to switch, but let me ask you, how can we offer stability in the middle of a pandemic when things are

constantly fluid and changing. A one size fits all does not work here and may not be a viable option for a lot of communities.

Reorganization in February will obviously cause changes in the classrooms, but telling parents since the Return to School plan was released in August time and time again that there would be this option, and to now go back on this will put more pressures on families that are already dealing with heavy burdens. This discussion as I have seen is putting parents against parents, those that are in the face to face vs. those in the virtual, and once again, those with the strongest voices are the ones that are being listened to, remember the parents that do not have a voice, do not know how to use their voice because of barriers, or are afraid to - these are the parents we need to ensure are being represented.

Let's keep our most vulnerable on the top of our list when making decisions for everyone and as Catholics support one another during this time, and all time.