

Precious Blood Catholic School Delegation Presentation
Re: St. Catherine Catholic School Boundary Review
November 11, 7pm

Topic of Deputation:

Precious Blood Catholic School Parent Community's concerns and perspective regarding the St. Catherine Catholic School's boundary review.

Key Issues:

Student welfare, Precious Blood Catholic School's current enrolment challenges, opportunity and financial cost to our greater Catholic community.

Precious Blood Presentation:

Precious Blood Catholic School's position is that as part of the greater Catholic community we are very empathic to the enrolment concerns facing St. Catherine's. We endeavour to be a school that leads by example when it comes to living up to our shared Catholic values. A Catholic school is indeed a much needed pillar of any smaller community and to see enrolment numbers diminishing is not something we want to see, given potential remedies the Board may wish to implement going forward. Our values and commitment to Catholic education are shared with our fellow schools. Our goal is to look at this more broadly, in terms of our greater Catholic community and ultimately, what is best not only for pragmatic realities (costs and facility utilization) but namely, what is best for our students and their welfare.

We would be remiss as part of our greater Catholic community if we didn't touch on the prudent issue of fiscal responsibility and our collective responsibility as taxpayers to look at the financial and even opportunity costs of these proposals. Portables come with a cost and that cost is well justified when we look at areas of growing demographics and enrolment numbers, but not when we have excess physical capacity within the greater community. Transportation costs have to be considered in the calculus for this boundary review, with the duplication of busing costs for a generous transition period, being properly compounded by tangible student welfare concerns. Lastly, we would ask this Board to fully consider the opportunity cost of devoting more staff and community resources to moving this scenario forward through the formal process.

Proposing that upwards of 10 portables be built under scenario 3 of the boundary review, when there are permanent (indoor) classrooms under utilized at Precious Blood seems to be a proposition not well aligned with our values of championing student welfare, as a greater Catholic community. Precious Blood's numbers being relied upon by Board staff are not reflective of current realities, in terms of enrolment and utilization.

Due in part to Covid and a shift to virtual e-learning our current enrolment numbers in this report are inflated by approximately 71 pupils (current physical enrolment is 388 pupils). Precious Blood currently has unused facility capacity, in that, 3 classrooms are currently not being utilized, due to lower enrolment numbers. One of the justifications for exploring scenario 3 is that Precious Blood is at 94% OTG utilization, whereas, the reality on the ground, is that we have 3 classrooms not being utilized. From a student welfare perspective, portables are meant to be a temporary solution for a growing student population, however it would seem imprudent to move students from permanent and under utilized facilities at Precious Blood, to “temporary” portables at St. Catherine’s. There is also the student welfare issue of adequate washroom facilities in place at St. Catherine’s to handle this envisioned influx of students. Precious Blood currently has 2 sets of washrooms for boys and girls, whereas Board staff have indicated there is only a single set of washrooms for boys and girls at St. Catherine’s. Championing student welfare is very well aligned with our shared Catholic values and is something that unites us as a larger community.

Action Requested:

Precious Blood Catholic School and St. Catherine Catholic School share the same parish church but also share the same level of compassion and commitment for Catholic education. Demographics change and evolve over time and our recommendation would be one of flexibility to the Board. That while a boundary review may not make sense at this time, from a student welfare, logistical and financial standpoint, that the Board strongly consider flexibility to allow St. Catherine the time needed to properly assess future demographic changes and to preserve its school. We stand united by our Faith, compassion and shared responsibility for ensuring the best possible education for our kids.