

Thank you Trustees and Board staff, for this opportunity to speak to this Capital Priorities agenda item. I am here supporting the highest priority for St Margaret, and the associated project for a new school at the Baycrest site.

Some of you who have been here for many years might be saying to yourself, ‘my God, this guy is here again ? wasn’t he here 11 or 12 years ago, delegating for St Margaret ?’ Indeed I was. I also cannot believe I’m here again, still fighting to see this project realized.

Three weeks ago at the Corporate Services meeting, there was a Capital Program Status Update, where all current projects were reported on.

Many projects have a funding shortfall, due to this post-pandemic inflationary period we are in, not just the St. Margaret-related project at Baycrest.

For the new School at the Baycrest site, it was suggested by the Education Ministry staff, that the School Board apply for additional funding through the Capital Priority funding process (page 15 of 44 on the Sept 14 agenda, point #6).

This was a surprise to me, as Capital Priority funding applications are usually for brand new projects, not projects that were previously approved.

This project was previously approved at the Board and Ministry level, and now we are required to ‘start over’ it seems with Capital Priorities submission.

So be it, I’m here to whole-heartedly support St. Margaret as the highest priority in this Capital Priorities submission in 2023. You’d be hard-pressed to find any other school community that has endured what we have in the last 15 years or so.

St. Margaret school itself was built for 300 students on a 2-acre site, over 70 years ago. By around 2010 it had reached a student population of about 660 students, with 12 portables on this tiny property; virtually no room left for play area.

In 2012-13 school year (11 years ago), the school population was divided into 2 campuses as a ‘temporary measure’ until a long-term solution could be arrived at.

So the grade 5 to 8 students moved to a former TDSB high school about 2 km away, and the JK to grade 4 students were left at St Margaret school.

Finally a year or two later, St Margaret was approved for a replacement school by the Ministry, using Proceeds of Disposition as the primary funding.

A design for a new school on the St Margaret property was developed for 660 pupils, but was rejected by the Ministry.

Then a few years later a 5-acre property on Baycrest Ave was declared surplus by the Public Board, and Toronto Catholic purchased it.

A new Catholic school is planned for this site, and it will be large enough (500 students) to handle the over-subscription of both St Margaret and Our of the Assumption school, with appropriate boundary changes. The design work has been done, and the engagement with City planning has begun.

With St Margaret returning to a more appropriate size of 300 to 350 students for JK to grade 8, the renovations can proceed, including the long-awaited Full-Day Kindergarten upgrades, and new gym and day care.

So it's a win-win for both school communities (St Margaret and OLA), and a big win for the Bathurst/Wilson and Bathurst/Lawrence neighbourhoods, where support for Catholic education is strong, and a new school is needed.

So here we are, in the 12th school year of a 2-campus St Margaret school, with no end in sight, unless this Capital Priorities submission has St Margaret as the highest priority.

I know many of the Trustees have schools in their area they see as deserving of Capital Priorities, and I don't diminish that, but I think if you look at the totality of facts in front of you, you'd be hard pressed to see another school more deserving than St Margaret.

Thank you.