

Delegation Speech of Joyce Obatusin on Boundary Review.

I represent the community, and I am a member of the Parent Council of St. Andre Catholic School. I am here to appeal to the integrity of the Board and your good office, to ensure that the Board's commitment to Catholic values, transparency and community engagement without bias is achieved in this process. I know that you understand the importance of community involvement in your decision making to best serve the course of the community. I also know that your focus remains on students' achievement ensuring every student thrives by enabling such an environment in decision making. I am here to reinforce that idea and further bring to fore the importance of being guided by the provisions of Policy S. A 03, the principles of equity, inclusiveness amongst others and the need for due justice to have its course and reflected in our decision making in relation to the ongoing boundary review discourse in our community.

To buttress this, *Regulations 4 and 12 of Policy S. A 03 Elementary School Attendance Boundary Review Policy* provides thus:

Regulation 4 "boundary review Policy shall be conducted in accordance with equity and fairness following procedure"

Regulation 12 providing a high level of the procedure states "to the extent possible and practical, boundary adjustments shall be guided by the following principles:

- *"Boundaries are to follow logical and easily identifiable routes and/or physical landforms where possible, such as major roads, rail-lines, watercourses, parklands, ravines, and established political boundaries. → in line with this, the new St. Fidelis school will be within 800m of the residences of the proposed boundary recommended by the Board.*
- *"Schools affected by a nearby boundary adjustment benefit to the fullest extent possible, both in terms of maximizing student enrolment and utilization of available classroom space" → in line with this also, since St Andre is already an oversubscribed school, it makes sense to direct new students to this new school community (St Fidelis) with the additional classroom space which is within their boundary.*

Given this clear Policy on Elementary School Boundary Review, the boggling question is "Why would anyone oppose the clearly researched recommendation by professional Board staff which determined that the proposed boundary changes are in the best interests of both school communities? In my opinion, in line with the enabling *Policy S. A 03* and in the interest of *equity and fairness*, students especially those within the boundary review should not in any manner be excluded from the opportunity to be part of a community school that is closer to them, has available space and resources, to face challenges travelling to a further school, which is also a safety risk due to the proximity of major thoroughfares. It would also be fiscally responsible as the Board would need less bussing.

I submit that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well.

It is not far-fetched that the *boundary review policy* is an offshoot of the Canadian Charter Rights, principles of inclusion, diversity and equity and ignoring the guiding procedure provided in *regulation 12* will be tantamount to violating the esteemed Charter which I believe is not the intent of the distinguished Board of Trustees.

To this end, my appeal is that the provisions of Policy S. A 03 should not be used as a weapon and shield concurrently - should not be used to exclude some and include others as it would defeat its purpose and not reflect the objectives of the Guidelines for Policy Development and Implementation in Ontario schools.

Evidently, St Andre is overpopulated beyond capacity, as a result turns down students who otherwise should have access to Education in their local school community, thereby inadvertently violating their rights to education.

With all due respect, the aim of this appeal is not to rub shoulders with the distinguished Board of Trustees or criticize the position of any community, but rather as a community representative, I appeal to your good office, requesting your approval of the recommended proposal unconditionally. This proposal will realign both school communities with the already limited resource capacity of the Board. This proposal helps both schools succeed.

Finally, I appeal to your good conscience and ask, “What Would Jesus Do?” We are Catholics, followers of Jesus Christ who loved and gave himself for us regardless of who we are. The children in question are Catholics whom He died for inclusively without bias and on their behalf, are saddled with the responsibility of deciding what is in their best interest in this circumstance and in the spirit of fairness, equity and good conscience.

I wrap up with the story of the Good Samaritan to ask “Who is our neighbor? Let us not forget that we are stewards mandated to fight for the course of the community without favoritism, ensuring equity and justice is duly served, and are accountable to our Master knowing that to whom much is given, much is expected.

I would also like to remind us in closing that posterity is watching.

Thank you for the opportunity and please support the boundary proposal simpliciter.