

Angela Kennedy
Trustee, Ward 11
Chair, TCDSB
Via email: Angela.Kennedy@tcdsb.org

Dear Chair Kennedy

Please find enclosed a letter from MPP Raymond Cho regarding the moratorium on school closures.

Hratch Aynedjian
Executive Assistant
Raymond Cho, MPP

November 9, 2017

Trustee Angela Kennedy
Chair of Toronto Catholic District School Board
80 Sheppard Avenue East,
North York, Ontario M2N 6E8

Re: Moratorium on School Closures

Dear Ms. Kennedy,

As a Member of Provincial Parliament for Scarborough Rouge-River and a former Toronto City Councillor for 25 years in the same area; I have taken the liberty of writing this letter to categorically support the moratorium on the closure of three schools in my riding - St. Gabriel Lalemant Catholic School, The Divine Infant Catholic School and St. Rene Goupil Catholic School. Further, based on Ministry memorandum B09, dated June 28th, 2017, I ask that you choose to halt the current PARG review process as it is one of the options provided by the Ministry memorandum, and keep all the schools open.

During the past year, I attended several community meetings held at different schools together with TCDSB School Trustee, Mr. Garry Tanuan of Ward 8, school Parent Council leaders, parents at the schools under review including staff from TCDSB. It was clearly apparent the frustration and deep concerns being experienced by the parents and students of these schools. The last thing that

everyone wants is to have their schools closed and have to move to somewhere away from their community.

Earlier this year, I raised the concerns of our residents at the Legislature and asked the Minister to redress this issue. On June 28th, 2017, the Ministry issued the memorandum B09 which permits the Board to halt the PARG process if the process is still underway and has not reached a verdict.

By placing an immediate moratorium on the school closure process, you will stop the uncertainty in the minds of the parents & students about the future of their schools that led to a decline in enrollment and allow time for the schools to rebuild & motivated community to grow.

The uncertain atmosphere created by this process has had an adverse effect on our schools. A case in point is St. Gabriel Lalemant; the school's enrollment was at a healthy 90%. The latest capacity number is significantly lower, 22% lower at 69%. Parents uncertain about their local school's future have found alternative options. A large number of the parents & students have migrated to the local Public School system. The process itself is causing schools to lose students.

As a 25-year City Councillor, I can attest that the schools are an integral part of our communities. Beyond being the central part of the education venue for our kids, the schools provide the community space for our communities to meet and participate in the electoral process. It is very vital that our children live in close proximity to their schools. For years we have been asking that kids return to walking to school to alleviate the vehicular traffic congestion around the schools during the drop off and pick up. Increasing the pupil numbers per school would unintentionally increase the vehicular traffic around the school and cause further unsafe areas around the schools.

While I understand the challenges that the Boards and the Ministry of Education face in the rural parts of the province, I don't understand why the Ministry lumped the rest of the school boards in urban settings in the same vein. The anxiety that the report from the Ministry has created and the vagueness of their Memorandum dated June 28th, 2017 is reprehensible. The uncertainty surrounding the future of the school is further exasperating the situation when frustrated parents uncertain of the future of their local school are making the drastic moves and finding alternatives to the Catholic schools.

In the meantime, I urge you to halt this process of school closures within the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

Should you need any further information please feel free to contact myself at any time.

Sincerely,

Dr. Raymond Cho
Member of Provincial Parliament
Scarborough-Rouge River

cc: All TCDSB Trustees
TCDSB Director of Education