

Dianne Ray

Good evening board members, Trustees and attending guests,

I am here on behalf of myself and many parents to address our concerns of the possible scenarios to be implemented. There is scenario 23 which was put together by the ARC and includes the closure of Dickson and the construction of a new school. Due to the lack of provincial funding, this is unlikely to happen. We also have Scenario A and B which was put together by the board over the summer. For many reasons, these do not suit our community....and do not make sense financially or for the children. The ARC had come up with a similar solution with Scenario 11, but didn't have an addition to any school, or another French Immersion program. These ideas had been suggested at the ARC meetings, but all dismissed. These scenarios will affect 350 children with no long term solution, as you can see by the numbers in 2016/17, Tait, Blair and Highland will be over capacity again. Also, the board doesn't want to build JK-6 schools over 400 students, so why would they add an addition on to a school which costs millions of dollars to us taxpayers, only to make a school of more than 500? Is this what they want.....this (money) over this (pile of letters from students)?? That is what they are showing to us! Also, where is this mass enrollment we are preparing for....the history of enrollment from 2006 to 2011 shows a declining enrollment. According to all the projected enrollments, the total capacity of all 5 schools is 1691 and total of (unofficial) enrollments for this current year is 1676. In consultation with Cambridge City Planning, no further expansion is permitted in West Galt therefore we are still Ok. We know it isn't a direct science, but changes can be made to make this better without upsetting so many children and without spending unnecessary tax dollars. Again, they want to do this because it comes down to money, which was mentioned at one of the public meetings. Currently, Tait, Blair and Dickson are under capacity and Highland and St Andrews over capacity. If there is some sort of "mass" enrollment going to take place, then all of this is premature, as it will have to be revisited in another few years. Also, the fact that there is no phase in or out period for the children and communities to adjust to thisagain,,,thinking of the children? Definitely not. This process has been very rushed and since last October when it started, was so formally advertised, parents didn't understand what it all meant. It was mentioned at one board meeting in May that it is an ARC, that is what it is called and cannot be changed. Why not....things get changed all the time...look at the Catholic school that is in the process of having the one school name changed! As an Arc member, it became almost a joke at the end of last year when another member asked the question "what was the most number of meetings an ARC has had? Then, they just wanted to have the meetings over with and were agreeing on things, just for the sake of not having to attend any more meetings and meet dates to allow the building of the new school as soon as possible. If one was not serious about what is best for the children, they should not have "signed" up to be a member....you cannot put a timeline on the future of the children.

Let's take a look at the at risk children at Dickson. There are 49 at risk students.....that equates to 43% of the school. Some of these children have come from larger schools with "specialized" programs for their needs, but have done much better at the smaller; community based Dickson School, in the general population. They receive the help that they need, not only from the EA's, CYW, or SERT, but

also from other teachers, as they all know every students "special requirements" They also know many students and the students make them feel like anyone else in the school. Many of these children will not do well at such a large school. Will our specialty teachers, which are 5 in total, be going to Highland as well? And will all of Dickson students remain together in each class grade, or will they be split up? With school boards not holding children back in grades, they need to get the best education possible and our at risk students especially, DO receive that at Dickson. This is the part in their life where they will spend 7-8 years of education. At no other time will they spend that amount of time at one educational facility. Let's remember, these are the children that will be supporting you and us in our retirement years.

As another parent has read, there is a better approach and scenario that we have explored to better options (Scenario 11-with some added changes)

Also, new is not always better.....Dickson has all the resources the children require, like any other school. It has been erect for 134 years and will be for many more....unlike any new school. The excuses given to close it are unacceptable.....one of them being no grass.....many schools in Brantford, Hamilton and Toronto to name a few have no grass area....we do have a green space. Also, there are times at schools when only "on tarmac" play is allowed! We have many beautiful parks in the area that the children get to enjoy and have a change of scenery!

Let's look at this realistically....is it about the children or dollars.....you decide!

In conclusion, as an ARC member, I feel that the Arc process has been extremely unsuccessful in its final proposal. We, as community feel that the ARC should be reopened and conducted in a truly democratic manner and putting the best interests of the children and the communities first.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude for the opportunity to present to the Trustees this evening.

This year I had the honor of enrolling my son into Jr. Kindergarten at Dickson Public School, after moving to the area in August of 2012 I was drawn to Downtown Galt because of the delicate integration into its heritage.

Dickson was no exception to this observation for me. Constructed in 1867, Dickson Public School was designed by architect William Scott and built by the hands William Webster who incorporated Scottish Georgian influence with locally-quarried cut limestone. This marginally corned structure emanates foundational strength.

When you come to see Dickson you will see that the children at our school are at home within these historical walls. The school is perhaps small in comparison to a new facility but for a four year old, this school is a fortress.

A place where magic happens and learning begins. Where everyday their family gets to walk them to school and catch up a little before the busy work world kicks in. Our children play with one another in the playground on our mighty 0,96 acres, and have space to explore with a fenced green area, park across the street and library within walking distance to attend local learning programs.

Our multipurpose gymnasium has never been a conflict of interest for any of our children nor staff members.

Each of the rooms in our school are multidimensional and we welcome an increase in our student body to facilitate twenty children per class. This can be accomplished by the board selecting a boundary change and increasing our student body from 114 to its full capacity of 161.

Forward thinking means that we have to embrace diversity and inclusion by integrating the old with the new. In the same way that Cambridge City Hall has done this, Dickson can continue this trend to meet the boards requirements.

The students of Dickson Public School help guide each other. The older teach the young and the young remind the older what it means to let go and play.

Teachers at Dickson know their students and their parents personally. The parental community is in touch with one another and this school is an asset to the local downtown development of Galt.

This school is more than just a facility, in the same way that Canada is made up of provincial diversity, so are our Public Schools. Centralization at these grade levels will be detrimental to the students.

Amalgamating these grades into over populated schools will only create distance between the students themselves and the learning they will receive at these concentrated levels.

Dickson Public, Saint Andrews and Galt Collegiate Institute are all a part of the Heritage of this city and the growth of our children.

After speaking with the parental community I have been informed that if this closure was to go through, several families will be switching over to the separate school board, which means a loss in financial tax support for the public system.

I ask you if you are considering the closure of the doors to this school that you come and look into the faces of the children who occupy the halls and spend their youth laughing, learning and playing. Please take the time to come tour our school during regular hours before you vote so you can have a first hand view of the beauty we see everyday.

Much Respect,

Jessica Ferneyhough RPN

Heather Shingler

Good evening, I am here on behalf of the Dickson School Community and residents of the West Galt area. I'm here to discuss my opposition of scenario 23 A and B, and bring forth a scenario that actually reaches many of the Goals that the ARC has set out to achieve.

The scenario I would like to present is based upon scenario 11 which includes

- 1-Dickson Public School stays open
- 2-Boundary changes to lessen enrollment at Highland and increase the enrollment at Tait and Dickson Public Schools, to utilize the schools to their full capacity.
- 3- Add French immersion to Tait or Blair.
- 4-Add grade 6 to Dickson and Highland.
- 5-Offer grades 7 and 8 at St. Andrews.

However if scenario 23 is implemented all four schools in the West Galt review area will be over capacity within five years, this is in direct violation of the ARC's goals and objective for establishing long term sustainable solutions of 10 years. It has been stated at different meetings that creating an over-capacity situation would make a "better case" for the board to gain funding for a new facility, also stated we are currently 12th on the list for obtaining funding for a new facility. So why are we in such a hurry to sacrifice our children's quality of education and using them as financial pawns to gain funding? Funding that the children squeezed into these schools will not benefit from. This is also not a guarantee that a new facility will be approved within a reasonable timeframe. The over capacity of all the West Galt schools could also cause another review to be needed and another ARC to be created within the 5 year time period, that is not only costly and time consuming but a ridiculous waste of resources, and the next time we would not have the option of simple boundary changes as the kids would have no where to be moved to and we would just have to keep our fingers crossed that the new facility would be approved.

Rushing the closure of Dickson Public School is short sighted and selfish. Writing off hundreds of kids in the West Galt area so we can obtain funding is wrong and "puts kids last" not first..

The numbers reflected by the ARC showed a decrease in enrollment numbers and population, however on November, 15,2011 during the City of Cambridge presentation they showed a steady increase of numbers and population in the West Galt area. A variation of scenario 11 could increase the utilization rates of the schools without creating an over capacity issue, just by simple boundary changes that are cost effective and have minimal impact on the students and community, while elevating the over crowding at Highland Public School.

The effects of scenario 23 would cause Tait St. School to undergo some serious renovations that are estimated upward of 3.5 million dollars and that figure has not even taken a new gymnasium into consideration as that would also need to be added to the school for the amount of children that would possibly attend. That cost is astronomical, and goes over and above the cost of keeping Dickson Public School open. For what, a temporary solution that will cost the board and taxpayers millions of dollars and we still have not provided any long-term solutions for our children.

It seems to me and a number of Dickson School parents and West Galt community members that scenario 23 A and B has nothing to do with what is best for the children, and has everything to do with the almighty dollar.

I would like to present for you as a whole a petition signed by many Dickson School community members as well as concerned Cambridge residents our petition states,

We the citizens of West Galt and the Dickson School community graciously request the WRDSB committee of the Whole to reconsider the recommendations brought forth from the ARC's accommodation report-namely Scenario 23 A and B. If the committee is unable or unwilling to reconsider these recommendations, then we collectively propose that a transition period of no less than six years be established before the phasing in of Scenario 23. This would allow children already enrolled in JK at Dickson Public School the opportunity to complete their JK-5 education at this facility. It would also allow parents enrolling their children for the 2013/14 school year the opportunity to make an informed decision regarding which elementary facility their child will attend.

I would like to thank you for your time and I would like to thank you in advanced for your consideration of the variation of scenario 11 and our petition. Thank-you

Heather Shingler

Nicole Papke

Ladies and Gentleman of the Board of Trustees, good evening and thank you for allotting me time to speak on this important matter.

It has been five months since I last stood before you as a delegate regarding the West Galt accommodation review.

To say that I return with a heavy heart, frustration, distress and anger would be understatement.

I don't even know if what I have to say matters but feel I must fight for all the children in my area and the patchwork of our neighbourhood.

My family lives in the area that the WRDSB planners refer to as "area J". It may just be area J to the planners but for those of us that live there it is home. Many purchased their homes in this neighbourhood specifically because it was in the Highland Catchment area. In fact real estate ads in Galt advertise this feature. I thought I had done the right thing in order to ensure that my children were able to attend Highland.

- I am sorry that all proposals offer no solution for Dickson Public School other than closure. I understand how painful this must be and I know their parents will speak to the issue. I am glad that the planners are considerate in keeping all the Dickson students together. What I fail to understand is how the planners can justify fragmenting "area J" by immediately tearing some children away from their teachers, friends and the only school they have known? I believe that the same right and consideration should be afforded to the children of our area J, especially since we did the right thing and bought in the Highland Catchment area.
- How can it be that English stream students from area J that have attended Highland for 1, 2, 3, and 4 years will be forced to leave the only school they have known and to go to Tait next year?
- How can it be that current **out of bounds** French Immersion students from the Blair Road school area will be grandfathered to continue to attend Highland, yet the planners will change the boundary for area J and have those students attend Tait? Again not keeping students with their peers.
- How can it be that **current out of bounds** French Immersion students from the Tait school area in grades 3 and above will be grandfathered, along with their younger siblings in FI, to remain at Highland? They are out of the Highland catchment area, yet area J will be sacrificed.
- How can it be that those French Immersion students from area J in grades 3, 4 will be grandfathered, along with their younger siblings, yet those in Grade 1 or 2 with no older siblings must go to Tait immediately? This fragments our neighbourhood.

None of this seems fair and equitable to the children of "Area J". The needs of all other groups out of the Highland Catchment area are being considered at the expense of our children. Again I can only revert back to the simple fact that those in Area J purchased their homes in the Highland Catchment Area.

Further the planners have not considered the life altering changes this will have on the families who have chosen to purchase their homes, raise their children, establish friends, establish daycare/afterschool care options, social circles....I can go on about the implications.

I may not agree with the planners but I could understand a rational decision; but for the planners to accommodate all of those outside of the current Highland Catchment area to the detriment and disruption of the Area J children and parents that live in the current Highland Catchment area is completely irresponsible.

I am certain that with further study and more equitable solution can be obtained.

On a personal note I have two daughters at Highland. My eldest is in Grade One French Immersion and is completely distressed and beside herself at the prospect of being separated from her teachers, friends and the only school she has ever known.

Thank you for listening.

Nicole Papke Kernoghan

Amanda Carere

Good evening, My name is Amanda Carere . I reside in West Galt and my young daughter attends Dickson Public School. In the short time that she has attended this school we feel that we have already become part of the "Dickson Family". This deep connection to our community and families in the surrounding area is what makes this school unique and has truly stood the test of time. I feel that this is not the time for Dickson School to be closing its doors for good and I am grateful to be able to speak to you all and have a chance to voice my concerns and opinions.

My main focus on speaking tonight is to promote forward thinking with respect to the future sustainability within our neighborhoods and all of the schools that will be affected by this decision being brought forward. Concentrating on a quick fix and shutting down our school and sending our kids off to either Tait or Highland may only compound our issues. If we can take a broader look at the Dickson issue I feel that as a community we can all come up with a responsible and proactive alternative that will minimize negative impact on all of the children – not just the Dickson students and maintain the balance between the social, environmental, and economic growth to ensure desirable learning environments for all students and staff now and in the future.

Before the board makes any decision to close down Dickson, I would implore you to consider and reconsider the following:

- 1) Change borders between Tait St and Highland schools. Tait St had continually had a pressing issue with respect to no bus access and parent drop off. It seems that this year that problem may be alleviated with the acquisition of the West River Rd property and the proposal to build a loading zone for busses and vehicles to enter.
- 2) Add Grade 6 to Dickson and Highland school. In doing this, Dickson would be running closer to capacity. These border changes would help alleviate the overcapacity at Highland.
- 3) This would bring up another option to the table. With the possibility of grade 6 students moving to Highland and Dickson this could reopen discussion of St Andrews being turned back into a school that only offers grade 7 and 8

Let's focus on refreshing our heritage and embracing it instead of erasing it. Take a look around at our heritage buildings in West Galt. Who knows where Dickson could be in a few years. We could possibly acquire one or more of the adjoining properties and look towards expanding and refreshing this beautiful heritage school of ours. This could take on similar qualities of the City Hall updates – blending new with the old – and adopting the eco friendly policies and technologies. It is time to focus on where this town came from instead of denying its heritage in favor of a 6-7 million dollar Super School. The closure of Dickson school simply needs to be a topic to be brought back to the table.

This excerpt is taken from the WDRSB School information Profile from February 2012.

"The personal relationships that exist between staff and students is one that is hard to find in larger, more populated schools. Dickson is an important cornerstone for this very caring and concerned neighbourhood."

Let's keep that statement running true by fostering wellness, well-being and compassion into this school system. Being sustainable is and will continue to improve the quality of life while supporting the best potential learning environments for all children involved. We do not need another Condo development company gobbling up our beautiful history. Walk through the halls, you see reminders of many past students. Talk to the neighbors. They all have or had kids that went to this school....even some of the parents have graced their presence in this school. This is a strong community that has deep roots firmly planted in this area and neighborhood. Please let's keep it this way!

<http://www.wrdsb.ca/planning/files/2012/04/Dickson-School-Information-Profile.pdf>

Ladies and Gentleman of the Board.

As a parent of TWO HPS kids and a member of the close-knit Area J community, I am perplexed and outraged by the most recent proposal put forward under the West Galt Accommodation Review.

It is apparent that Dickson had to close and I understand that decision. This is indeed sad. I empathize with these families of Dickson for their school has been taken away. While I feel for their plight, I'm sure they take comfort in the knowledge that their children will have the continuity, and consistency of staying together, or at least having that option. The Children of Area J are also being displaced by this proposal. In reality, their school has been closed also. Only, their emotional and educational well-being has not been given the same consideration as their Dickson counterparts. They have not been provided the option to stay together, their entire neighbourhood had been fractured. A mess of confusing grandfathering, unclear transportation provisions and general disregard for their community as a whole is what they are left with.

As if this oversight wasn't hard enough to comprehend, a further look in the how this scenario was proposed is even more shocking.

As we all know, HPS is over capacity. This is echoed in enrollment projections right up to 2019.

If this is the case

WHY:

- Has it taken so long for action?
- Would Dickson be offered to option to attend HPS with at least a third of their population resides in TAIT?
- FI not have been offered several years ago? (I understand that there are board minimums in terms of enrollment, but as stated by Senior Planner at October 25 meeting...."if you build it, they will come"
- Is a final proposal posted 72 hours from Board Meeting where a decision could be rendered???

While I understand that Area J is wanted at Tait to help substantiate the new FI, the actual numbers are minimal when compared to these OOB students allowed to stay and attend HPS.

****all numbers provided by Board Planner

K. Breen

There are a total of 183 FI at HPS for 2012 school year

Of those 183, 75 are Out of Bounds

And of those 75, 34 of these students are not even in the West Galt review Area.

I have been pouring over these scenarios since they were presented at the October 25th Public Meeting. It is difficult to consider every scenario as the grandfathering could potentially impact these numbers significantly. I do know that based on the 12, yes 12 Area J FI students that will attend Tait for GR 2 and 3 under 2012 implementation, HALF will be staying at HPS due to Grandfathering.

To Recap: 6 area J students will be sent to Tait while their neighbours and friends can stay at HPS.

