

KAREN SOLTAN

Cheryl L. Gzik,
Administrative Assistant - Elementary Staffing and Accommodation Review,
Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board

The purpose of my submission is to present some concerns which have arisen after attending all 3 ARC meetings and reading the information posted on the Board's website.

I am a parent of 2 teenage children, one of whom is graduating from the PCVS Integrated Arts Program this year. Our home school is Adam Scott and my second child is considering both the Integrated Arts and the International Baccalaureate program for grade nine. I therefore feel like we have a stake in the ARC process. I have attended all 3 meetings so far and intend to be at the final one next week.

I understand that the schools were chosen for review based on certain criteria as specified on the Board website. Crestwood is excluded because the physical location of the school is outside of the city. A school where about half of the students come from within Peterborough, according to the school website, would presumably be affected by the same population decline predicted for the targeted schools. Crestwood is also excluded because it is currently functioning at capacity. My understanding is that PCVS is at capacity and yet remains on the list. It seems to me that the criteria for including a school on the list lack clarity and it would be helpful to see the statistics about future population growth in the county that exclude Crestwood from the list.

I trust that the financial information that is missing from the Board Reports on the individual schools will be available to the committee prior to its making a final decision. The schools are all very different in terms of their physical footprint and it would be informative to see the predicted costs of closing each school including the sale of property and the predicted costs of moving each school including specialty programs.

The support of PCVS by downtown businesses has been eloquently and thoroughly presented at several of the meetings as has the passion the students have for their school. Erica Cherney and Jeff Cox representing the DBIA presented a thorough portrait of the value of PCVS to the downtown based on the criteria on the ARC website and yet were criticized by a committee member leading many in the audience that night to feel there is an anti-PCVS bias on the committee. The structure of the Accommodation Review process itself has pitted the schools against each other and made many wonder how the committee can make a fair and just decision in such a divisive climate.

Another concern, which I haven't seen addressed, is the consequence of creating one large high school out of 2 smaller ones. One of the most positive aspects of all our Peterborough schools is their small size (1000 or fewer students). There is a growing trend in North America towards supporting smaller high schools to foster strong relationships between teachers and students, to reduce the number of students "falling through the cracks" and to promote cohesiveness through shared programs. This is clearly seen in the USA, in particular the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's support of smaller high schools in New York but we all know students who have felt lost, marginalized and abandoned at large high schools especially in suburban areas which are isolated from the community. The tremendous support we have seen from students of all our Peterborough schools for their schools says to me that we have succeeded in giving our students a strong connection to their schools, teachers and specialty programs. I would like to see the committee provide projections about how creating a new larger high school will preserve that feeling for our students and what benefits, other than short term financial ones for the Board, it will give our students.

Thank you very much for your time and I look forward to the next meeting and hope to see a decision made that is thorough and thoughtful and in the best interests of our students.

Karen Soltan
1230 6th Line Smith
RR4 Peterborough
Ontario K9J 6X5
(705) 292-1284
ksoltan @pipcom.com